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THE STUDY AND THE FIELDS

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TO

MY FRIEND

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

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STONEHENGE AND EMERSON—AMESBURY AND THE "IDYLLS OF THE KING"—POETS AND POETRY.

IT was a beautiful day; and, lounging about in the shadows cast by Stonehenge, we could not help realising that, after all, life *was* worth living. The cobwebs of daily care had all been blown away; not even the ghastly revelations of the Incorporated Society of Authors had power to worry us.

"Oh, let the fellows take extra discounts, extra everything—take the whole affair, in fact; only let us dream," was the burden of the song our lotus-loving souls sang just then. Its music was distinct enough, though the actual words were a trifle unshapen. The blue sky, and the springy turf, and the huge stones—knowing so many stories of the past and yet so silent—were enough for us as we lay stretched on our backs, with hands under our heads and straw hats drawn as far over our faces as possible.

The ladies—the charming little woman so grossly maligned in one of my books, and the fair but somewhat perky "seventeen" from the sweet Devonshire lanes—were very much occupied, a little distance off, watching the rabbits pop in and out of the city they had built, with all their supreme indifference to sacrilege, in the heart of some ancient warrior's tomb. Perchance the little beggars, safe from ferrets in their holiest of holies, danced

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on Roman coins and the bones of the forgotten brave, happy in their satisfied memories of the sweet wild thyme they had nibbled in the early morning, before the sun had driven the dew away.

Wilson amused himself, every now and then, by mumbling out something from under his hat; but I was too busy with my cigarette and its tiny cloud of smoke to pay much attention to him. I verily believe he was conjuring up some picture of Emerson and Carlyle as they sat and talked, years ago, on the very spot where we were then idling.*

On the way back to Amesbury, where we had put up our carriage, we climbed the rising ground, to where, centuries ago, Vespasian had formed his camp. In the valley beneath, surrounded by trees, we saw stately Amesbury House, where Gay wrote his *Beggar's Opera*, and near to which are all that now remain of the ruins of the once well-known Abbey, made acquainted with fame yet again in these latter days

* "After dinner we walked to Salisbury Plain. On the broad downs, under the gray sky, not a house was visible, nothing but Stonehenge, which looked like a group of brown dwarfs in the wide expanse—Stonehenge and the barrows—which rose like green bosses about the plain, and a few hayricks. On the top of a mountain, the old temple would not be more impressive. Far and wide a few shepherds with their flocks sprinkled the plain, and a bagman drove along the road. . . . . We walked round the stones, and clambered over them, to wont ourselves with their strange aspect and groupings, and found a nook sheltered from the wind among them, where C. lighted his cigar. . . . . Within the enclosure grow buttercups, nettles, and, all around, wild thyme, daisy, meadow-sweet, golden-rod, thistle, and the carpeting grass. Over us, larks were soaring and singing—as my friend said, 'the larks which were hatched last year, and the wind which was hatched many thousand years ago.' . . . . . We walked in and out, and took again and again a fresh look at the uncanny stones. The old Sphinx put our petty differences of nationality out of sight. To these conscious stones we two pilgrims were alike known and near. We could equally well revere their old British meaning. My philosopher was subdued and gentle. . . . . The spot, the gray blocks, and their rude order, which refuses to be disposed of, suggested to him the flight of ages, and the succession of religions." —EMERSON—*English Traits.*

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by our revered Tennyson, who laid here the scene of that last sad farewell between Arthur and Guinevere.

As I sit here now in the quiet of my study, my eyes unconsciously wander to the shelf on which rests a little green volume with the simple inscription, *Idylls of the King;* and once more the mingled pain and pleasure of that afternoon on Vespasian's Camp come back to me.

We had not rested there long before we found that we were not alone; for, near by, half hidden by a clump of trees, sat an artist with a light sketching-easel in front of him. Taking the liberty generally accorded a stranger in such a situation, I walked towards him, intending to ask permission to see his work. On nearing him, however, I found that his brushes lay on the grass by his side, and that he was deeply engrossed in a book—so deeply indeed that, as he subsequently confessed, he was not aware of our presence until I had got quite close to him. With hasty apologies, I turned, intent on retracing my steps; but he begged me to stay, making the while such enquiries about the neighbourhood as showed him to be a stranger. He had a charming bit of tree-and-distance on his canvas, and I craved permission for my companions to see it. Very soon we were all quite good friends, and chatting freely together. We found our new acquaintance a man of varied reading, and deeply interested in the neighbourhood.

"I was just dipping into Tennyson as you came along," he said. "What a marvellous passage that is in which Arthur reproaches Guinevere!—reproach, by the way, full of great and undying love, yet with no trace of weak condonation in it. You must know," he continued, in a kindly, unaffected manner, "that I am a great crank on Tennyson; and if you care to listen, I will read you the portion of the *Idylls* which has to do with yonder spot, where once the Abbey stood. Perhaps I shall have the

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good fortune not to bore you. I used to read well enough some few years ago."

We thanked him heartily, and made a group on the grass in front of him.

Nature had indeed blest our chance artist-acquaintance with more than ordinary gifts in this direction, and he had carefully cultivated them. As he commenced to read those last thirty-odd pages of the volume which tell of Guinevere, we were just dimly conscious that a sympathetic soul and a voice which varied with its theme, from manly strength to tender pity and childlike tenderness, were ministering to our enjoyment. Then, as the charm wound itself about us, the distant bleating of the sheep as they wandered to the music of their bells, and the song of the soaring lark were hushed; and we listened, painfully fearful of losing a syllable of the story, to the new strange presentment of what, though altogether familiar to us, was now hallowed by the shades of passionate pity which the reader infused into his task. The song of the novice:—

> "No light: so late, and dark and chill the night!
> O let us in, that we may find the light!"

made us oblivious to the sunshine which rested tenderly on all about us; but when Arthur's

> "Armed feet
> Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
> Rang coming,"

and the Queen fell from her seat,

> "And grovelled with her face against the floor:
> There with her milk-white arms and shadowy hair
> She made her face a darkness from the King:
> And in the darkness heard his armed feet
> Pause by her,"

and the King tore from his heart his sorrowful monologue, the ways of the world seemed strangely out of joint, and

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a blank dulness filled our brain and heart. Creation was all a failure; there was a blot even on the sun's face!

We never knew who the stranger was who read to us that afternoon—he told us he was but a wandering artist, whose tent was on the plain below—and now we scarcely recollect his features. As he read *he* did not seem to live for us on that hill-side: only Arthur and Guinevere were there:—Guinevere, prostrate, creeping an inch nearer the King as he paused in his sorrowful cry, daring to lay her hands about his feet; and Arthur, with his great, troubled heart:—

> "Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes;
> I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere;
> I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
> To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
> My pride in happier summers, at my feet"—

pouring out his pity and his love, his forgiveness and his farewell:—

> "I cannot touch thy lips; they are not mine,
> But Lancelot's."

> "I cannot take thy hand; that, too, is flesh,
> And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd."

> "I love thee still.
> Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
> Perchance . . . . . .
> Hereafter, in that world where all are pure,
> We two may meet before high God, and thou
> Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
> I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
> Nor Lancelot, nor another. . . . . .
> . . . . . Now must I hence.
> . . . And while she grovell'd at his feet,
> She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
> And, in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
> Perceived the waving of his hands that blest."

To say that we thanked the reader would be to say

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that we were but grateful as ordinary mortals are. I do not know how Wilson felt, but for myself, when the spell ceased, I was conscious of a hard dryness in my throat which made it painful to breathe; and big tears had been rolling over the cheeks of more than one "faire ladye."

Our artist-friend told us of his love of a roving life; and, thanking us, begged to be excused when we invited him to make his home with us in Sarum during his stay in the neighbourhood. And so, as the sun went down, we bade him a hearty God-speed, and wound our way to the village.

As we drove home in the freshness and beauty of the moonlit night, and the charm of the afternoon reading began to lift itself a little, we fell to talking of matters suggested by our "adventure"—for such the ladies persisted in calling it.

WILSON.—If our friend did nothing else this afternoon, I must confess that he showed us more clearly than ever that Tennyson, as author of *Guinevere*, is possessed of a genuine dramatic insight.

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes: perhaps Tennyson's gifts in this direction are more clearly evident in some of his shorter productions than in his more ambitious dramas. You know the critics ——

WILSON.—Pray do not quote the critics on Tennyson! If we talk of him at all, let us endeavour to say something in a fresh, unhackneyed manner.

THE BOOKWORM.—Then we had better leave him alone altogether; for the last word has been uttered, and the newest Tennyson-truth is now stale. When a concordance to his works has been compiled, an author has further need only of a guinea-per-annum society for his meaning to be altogether misrepresented and his gifts misunderstood. In a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, unless indeed they band themselves together as a

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society—then there are words, and words only; wisdom goes a-roaming.

WILSON.—You remember, of course, the text of Alfred Austin's great grumble against Tennyson in *The Poetry of the Period.* The burden of his regret appears to be that the laureate is not an eagle, and consequently does not soar. He twitters under our roof, sweeps and skims round and round our ponds, is musical in the branches of our trees, plumes himself on the edges of our fountains, builds himself a warm nest under our gables, and even in our hearts, but "does not soar." He is not satisfied that Tennyson should think with us of this particular day, feel with us of this day, and be the exponent of such poetical feelings as in this day we are capable of.

THE BOOKWORM.—And yet, what would he have? for a poet is no rattlebrain, saying what comes uppermost, and, because he says everything, saying, at last, something good; but a heart in unison with his time and country. There is nothing whimsical and fantastic in his production, but sweet and sad earnest, freighted with the weightiest convictions, and pointed with the most determined aim which any man or class knows of in his times. A great man does not wake up some fine morning, and say, "I am full of life; I will go to sea, and find an Antarctic continent: to-day I will square the circle: I will ransack botany, and find a new food for man: I have a new architecture in my mind: I foresee a new mechanic power." No; but he finds himself in the river of thoughts and events, forced onward by the ideas and necessities of his contemporaries. Every master has found his materials collected; and his power lay in his sympathy with his people, and in his love of the materials he wrought in. Great genial power, one would almost say, consists in not being original at all; in being altogether receptive; in letting the world do all, and

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suffering the spirit of the hour to pass unobstructed through the mind.*

Anyone overhearing our conversation just then would have had no doubt as to which direction, with us, the "great genial power" lay in. The ladies, "suffering the spirit of the hour to pass unobstructed through the mind," were sitting back in the carriage, silently watching the gleams of the moonlight on the Avon through the trees. Perchance, too, the music of the beat of the horse-hoofs on the quiet road, and the scent of the roses clustering round the cottage doors, made fit accompaniment to their thoughts of Arthur and his doughty knights.

And yet, in spite of this quiet beauty, *we* continued our talk, which, perhaps, was fitting rather for the lamp and the fireside.

WILSON.—But when poets actually succeed in thus catching and uttering the spirit of the age, they are accused of stealing from each other in a barefaced fashion. There is Lewis Morris, for example, whose popularity is undoubtedly due to his successful modernising, in a manner pleasing to the essentially middle-class spirit now rampant, of the thought of ancient Greece, and to his simplifying presentment of problems which force themselves just now on all men alike—he has been roundly accused of being only a popularizer of what is found in plenty in the writings of Browning and Tennyson.

THE BOOKWORM.—Such accusations only indicate an extremely narrow outlook on the part of those who make them. Because the same thought-wave which rolls over Tennyson and Browning extends itself to Lewis Morris,

* EMERSON.

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therefore, he is but a disciple of the others. What blindness, forsooth, to a law which accounts with certainty for much so-called plagiarism! Coleridge felt it incumbent on him to protest against similar misunderstandings existing when he published his *Christabel;* and in this protest we find him referring to critics who had no notion that there were such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great, and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they beheld flowing from a perforation made in some other man's tank.

WILSON.—I like to turn away, as often as I can, from this sapient nonsense, which really is enough to smother all poetic feeling and expression, to those golden days of Arab life, in which, when a poet arose in one tribe, the other tribes sent publicly to congratulate them on the occasion; and they themselves, of the favoured tribe, made entertainments, at which the women assisted, dressed in their nuptial ornaments, singing to the sound of timbrels the happiness of their tribe, who had now one to protect their honour, to preserve their genealogies and the purity of their language, and to transmit their actions to posterity.*

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes, those were certainly halcyon days. No Sartor walked in the midst to denounce the whole show of tinsel, exhorting the poet meanwhile to do one of three things:—Establish himself in Bedlam, begin writing Satanic poetry, or blow out his brains. *Then* the world was young, and life a dream, and poets inspired heralds—and in what could life be better?

The lights in the cottage windows of Stratford-under-Old-Sarum told us of the nearness of home. The ladies moved a little in the snug nest they had made for themselves with their wraps and rugs; and the hoofs of

* SALE'S *Introduction to the Koran.*

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our good bay mare rattled still more briskly along the dry road, for she knew right well that a clean stall and a good mouthful were near at hand.

Before we said our final good-nights, Wilson snatched a moment to speak of the care which should attend a poet in the introduction of any presentation of actual thought —in fact, anything other than description or sentiment— into his works. "He will sure to be misread, or misinterpreted, or both," he said. "I will point out to you, one of these evenings, how even Lewis Morris, of whom we have been speaking, who desires above all things to be remembered as one who never

"Sneered young souls out of faith,"

can be shown to have written, in his *Songs of Two Worlds*, most radical things on matters theological; and this can be done by simply detaching parts of his poems from their context."

I suppose it was but the turn of the wheel of association, but, sitting over my pipe that same night, when the others had retired to rest, I found the words heard from the lips of the stranger of the afternoon—

"Hereafter, in that world where all are pure,
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another,"

strangely mixing themselves up with this passage from *Songs of Two Worlds*:—

"We know not what we shall be, but are sure
The spark once kindled by the eternal breath
Goes not out quite, but somewhere doth endure
*In that strange life we blindly christen Death.**

* "Who knows but this which we call death be life,
And this our life be death?"
—*A motto taken from Euripides, and inscribed on the wall of Montaigne's study.*

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Somewhere he is, though where we cannot tell;
But whereso'er God hides him it is well."

I have italicised the line which appeared to me then, as it had done before, to be so notable in its beautiful simplicity as almost to make one fancy that it must have strayed into modern literature from out the terse, sweet dialogue on death which Beaumont and Fletcher gave to the world so many years ago:—

"MARTIUS.—Do'st know what 'tis to die?
"SOPHOCLES.—Thou do'st not, Martius,
And, therefore, not what 'tis to live: to die
Is to begin to live. It is to end
An old, stale, weary work, and to commence
A newer and a better. 'Tis to leave
Deceitful knaves for the society
Of gods and goodness."

But, knocking the ashes out of my pipe, I contrived at the same time to knock thought out of my head, and so followed the rest of the world into the quiet land of dreams.

And yet to me it was scarcely a *quiet* land of dreams, for in my sleep Lancelot and Guinevere troubled me sorely. Instead of the re-union Arthur had looked forward to in the other world, even there the guilty ones had found each other out.

"Two haggard shades, in robes of mist,
For longer years than each could tell,
Joined by a stern gyve, wrist with wrist,
Have roamed the courts of hell.

"Their blank eyes know each other not;
Their cold hearts hate this union drear. . . .
Yet one poor ghost was Lancelot,
And one was Guinevere!" *

* *The Punishment*, by EDGAR FAWCETT.

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Then, in the shifting phantasmagoria of my dreams, the Queen and her lover seem to have lost their identity; they had but newly come to the Land of Shadows, and, coming, had resolved themselves into the characters of the powerful picture Vedder painted to illustrate Aldrich's little poem, *Identity*:—

"Somewhere—in desolate, wind-swept space—
In Twilight-land—in No-man's-land—
Two hurrying Shapes met face to face,
And bade each other stand.

"'And who are you?' cried one, agape,
Shuddering in the gloaming light.
'I know not,' said the second Shape,
'I only died last night!'"

Then, with the subtle and ridiculous freedom of change which characterises dreams, the shades became Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne, of *The Scarlet Letter*.*

But I remember nothing more of that night's troubles; sweet, refreshing sleep must, at length, have shut the gates to shapes so frail, yet so persistent.

* "It was no wonder that they thus questioned one another's actual and bodily existence, and even doubted of their own. So strangely did they meet in the dim wood, that it was like the first encounter, in the world beyond the grave, of two spirits who had been intimately connected in their former life, but now stood coldly shuddering in mutual dread, as not yet familiar with their state, nor wonted to the companionship of disembodied beings. Each a ghost, and awe-stricken at the other ghost! They were awe-stricken likewise at themselves, because the crisis flung back to them their consciousness, and revealed to each heart its history and experience, as life never does, except at such breathless epochs. The soul beheld its features in the mirror of the passing moment. It was with fear, and tremulously, and, as it were, by a slow, reluctant necessity, that Arthur Dimmesdale put forth his hand, chill as death, and touched the chill hand of Hester Prynne. The grasp, cold as it was, took away what was dreariest in the interview. They now felt themselves at least inhabitants of the same sphere."

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LEWIS MORRIS AND HIS "SONGS OF TWO WORLDS."

A FEW evenings after our visit to Stonehenge, Wilson walked into the study with a rather formidable bundle of MS. in his hand.

"Ah! the Lewis Morris material," I suggested as I untied the papers.

WILSON.—Yes; but don't be alarmed; it is not such an extensive arrangement as you might suppose. However, I think you'll find from it how easy it is to prove, not only that Lewis Morris shares the spirit of the age—I have, by the way, placed against his expressions those of some of our authorities—but also that, by quoting detached scraps, you can turn an author's meaning, as a weather-cock on a windless day, in any direction which pleases you. My object has certainly not been to assort Mr. Morris down into a fixed position in any creed, or want of creed. Great men are super-creedal. It seems to me that the serenity of soul which they enjoy in their elevated position makes them capable of an extended range of vision, in which they see how mere theological systems are but the fringe to the garment of Infinite Truth; here touching its Eternal Source, there swinging out into the Endless Void. But this is no idle figure of speech, as anyone may gather from the ingenious fooling which has resulted from the endeavour to divine with certainty the particular division of theological opinion which Shakespeare

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favoured. And then what a battle was fought, some time ago, in the Browning Society, between Christians and Agnostics, over the religious belief of the author of *The Ring and the Book!* My aim has been rather to indicate how truthfully Mr. Morris has suffered the theological spirit of the hour to pass unobstructed through his mind, by comparing some of his poetry with the expressed belief and aspirations of a few of our acknowledged teachers. You will see that I have purposely excluded poets from this comparison, treating them rather as sharers and expressors with Mr. Morris of the thought of their contemporaries—or rather of their age. Where the extracts are from authorities deemed other than modern, you will find, after a little consideration, that the thoughts contained in them still live and burn with an essentially modern life, and have been revived in the works of most of the other writers whose names occur in my list.

And this is the compilation—or rather the comparison—he had made:—

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GOD BUT IMPERFECTLY KNOWN.

"Nay! we see but a part of God, since we gaze with a finite sight;
And yet not darkness is He, but a blinding splendour of light.

"Do we shrink from this light, and let our dazzled eyeballs fall?
Nay! a God fully known or utterly dark were not God at all."—*Evensong.*

"And absolute truth revealed, would serve to blind
The soul's bright eye, and sear with tongues of flame
The sinews of the mind."—*The Wanderer.*

THE DIVINE SEEN IN THE HUMAN.

"How else should man prove God's will, than through methods of human thought?
How else than through human words should he gather the things that he ought?"—*Evensong.*

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GOD BUT IMPERFECTLY KNOWN.

"You will never know Him who created these things; something else stands between you and Him. Enveloped in mist and with faltering voice the poets walk along."—MAX MÜLLER'S *Translation of the Rig-Veda.*

"But what finite mind can fully conceive the conditions included in Absolute Perfection? To evolve these will require eternity; for could they be evolved in less, they would not be unlimited."—HARRIS'S *Pre-Adamite Earth.*

"For us, as for Plato, ... absolute truth is in God—it is God Himself under one of His phases."—COUSIN'S *The True, the Beautiful and the Good.*

"Thenceforth there was, in very truth, no light . . . for the poor Cynic. So long accustomed to view all objects through a medium that deprived them of every glimpse of brightness, a single flash of so glorious a phenomenon, striking upon his naked vision, had blinded him for ever."—NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

THE DIVINE SEEN IN THE HUMAN.

"Let us know by all means that human nature is a very imperfect mirror to reflect the Divine; but instead of breaking that dark glass, let us rather try to keep it as bright as we can. Imperfect as that mirror is, to us it is the most perfect, and we cannot go far wrong in trusting to it for a little while."—MAX MÜLLER.

"The real God of a people is the *point d'honneur* of its nationality."—GEORGE ELIOT'S *Translation of Feuerbach.*

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THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE HUMAN HEART.

"Ay! everywhere
Echoes the same exceeding bitter cry.
Yet can the Father bear
To hide His presence from the children's eye;
Lets loose on good and bad the plague and sword;
And though wrong triumph, answer not a word?
Only deep down in the heart doth He declare
His constant presence; there, though the outward sky
Be darkened, shines a little speck of fair,—
A light which cannot die.
Though knees be weak, and eyes be blind;
Though we may seek and never find;
Here doth His hidden glory shine,
Unknown, Ineffable; Divine!"—*Behind the Veil.*

THE FUTURE OF MANKIND.

"There shall come from out this noise of strife and groaning
A broader and a juster brotherhood,
A deep equality of aim, postponing
All selfish seeking to the general good.
There shall come a time when each shall to another
Be as Christ would have him—brother unto brother.

"There shall come a time when knowledge wide extended
Sinks each man's pleasure in the general health,
And all shall hold irrevocably blended
The individual and the Commonwealth;
When man and woman in an equal union
Shall merge, and marriage be a true communion.

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THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE HUMAN HEART.

"In the outward and inward trials, we know not which way to turn. The heart faints and is ready to perish. Then in the deep silence of the soul, when the man turns inward to God, light, comfort, peace, dawn on him. His troubles—they are but a dew-drop on his sandal. His enmities or jealousies, hopes, fears, honours, disgraces, all the undeserved mishaps of life are lost to the view; diminished and then hid in the mists of the valley he has left behind and below him. Resolution comes over him with its vigorous wing; Truth is clear as noon; the soul in faith rushes to its God. The mystery is at an end."—THEODORE PARKER.

THE FUTURE OF MANKIND.

"The generation of men should be regarded as the life of one man, ever enduring and ever learning."—PASCAL.

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"There shall come a time when brotherhood shows stronger
Than the narrow bounds which now distract the world;
When the cannons roar and trumpets blare no longer,
And the ironclad rusts, and battle-flags are furled;
When the bars of creed and speech and race, which sever,
Shall be fused in one humanity for ever."

—*The New Order.*

"Contented to efface
Self, if from out its place
Blossoms the race."—*The Touchstone.*

"But, however it be, we live, and shall live indeed,
In ourselves or in others to come.
What more doth our longing need?"—*Evensong.*

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"Men cannot benefit those that are with them as they can benefit those who come after them, and of all the pulpits from which human voice is ever sent forth, is none from which it reaches so far as from the grave."—RUSKIN.

"As we *live for others* in life, so we *live in others* after death. . . . . How deeply does such a belief as this bring home to each moment of life the mysterious perpetuity of ourselves. For good, for evil, we cannot die. We cannot shake ourselves free from this eternity of our faculties."—FREDERIC HARRISON.

"The humblest life that ever turned a sod sends a wave—no, more than a wave, a life—through the ever growing harmony of human society."—FREDERIC HARRISON.

"We see the dead, not in their mortal part as laid to their rest, but living around us and in us, active and revered as they never were in life."—FREDERIC HARRISON.

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GOD'S PLAN FOR MAN'S PROGRESSION.

"Then I. 'If the desire
To which our thoughts aspire
Blazed forth afire;

"'If all the tasks were done,
All stubborn contest won
Beneath the sun;

"'If hope came not to cheer,
Nor bracing chill of fear,
Sweet sigh nor tear;

"'But all the race should sleep
In a broad calm too deep
For one to weep;

"'And o'er all lands should reign
A dull content inane,
Worse far than pain;

"'If all its griefs forgot,
Slowly the race should rot,
Fade and be not;

"'Would not the thought oppress
The dream that once could bless
With such distress,

"'That from the too great strain,
Life withered, heart and brain,
Would rise in vain?'

"Then he. 'The outcome this
Of all philosophies,
"Who seeks shall miss."'"

—*The Touchstone.*

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GOD'S PLAN FOR MAN'S PROGRESSION.

"It is not possession, but acquisition, which gives men pleasure and power; they observe sooner a small happiness new to them than a great happiness which is old."—H. A. TAINE.

"Whoever strives . . . . to reach an object . . . . may count on exciting an interest in our minds; but when once the matter is decided, we turn our eyes away from him; whatever once lies finished and done can no longer fix our attention."—GOETHE.

"Man is, properly speaking, based upon Hope, he has no other possession but Hope; this world of his is emphatically the 'Place of Hope.'"—CARLYLE.

George Eliot says in *Middlemarch*, that if any man once became content with shabby achievements that man was lost.

"But what work, from the translating of a German novel to the writing of an epic, was ever as the workman wished and meant it?"—CARLYLE.

"What is it that keeps men in continual discontent and agitation? It is, that they cannot make realities correspond with their conceptions, that enjoyment steals away from among their hands, that the wished-for comes too late, and nothing reached and acquired produces on the heart the effect which their longing for it at a distance led them to anticipate."—GOETHE.

"Did the Almighty, holding in his right hand *Truth*, and in his left *Search after Truth*, deign to proffer me the one I might prefer;—in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request *Search after Truth*."—LESSING.

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THE HOLINESS OF WORK.

"And wherefore to fatigue the Eternal ear
With those incessant hymns of barren praise?
Does not a sweeter sound go up to Him
From well-spent toilsome days,—

"And natural life, refined by honest love
And sweet unselfish liturgies of home,
The scheme of being, worked out by duteous souls
Careless of what may come?"
—*The Wanderer.*

"And now the past lies far away, and I
Can scarce recall those vanished days again;
No more the old faith stirs me, and no more
Comes the old barren pain.

"For now each day brings its appointed toil,
And every hour its grateful sum of care;
And life grows sweeter, and the gracious world
Shows day by day more fair."
—*The Wanderer.*

"Who toil aright, for those
Life's pathway, ere it close,
Is as the rose.

. . . . . .

"And since he seeks it less,
An unsought happiness
His toil shall bless."—*The Touchstone.*

"To labour is to pray."—*The Home Altar.*

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THE HOLINESS OF WORK.

"There is one plain rule of life, eternally binding, and independent of all variations in creeds, embracing equally the greatest moralities and the smallest. It is this—Try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances being both duly considered; and then DO IT."—JOHN STUART MILL.

"I know no more powerful remedy against the ills of the soul than the strong and serious application of the intellect to other objects."—VOLTAIRE.

"God will not have His work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise, shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver."—EMERSON.

"I think the most heart-whole man I ever knew was a man who had waited and watched, breaking stones through all weathers on the cold shoulder of a Yorkshire hill, and he could hardly see the stones he had to break, he was so sand blind. His wife was dead and all his children; his hut was open to the sky, and to the steel-cold stars in winter; but when once one said to comfort him, 'Brother, you will soon be in heaven!' he cried out in his rapture, 'I have been there this ten years!'"—ROBERT COLLYER.

The motto of the old monks, "Labour is worship."—See also amplified by Carlyle, especially in *Sartor Resartus*.

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WORSHIP—WITH RITUAL AND WITH SIMPLICITY.

"Though they may crowd
Rite upon rite, and mystic song on song;
Though the deep organ loud
Through the long nave reverberate full and strong;
Though the weird priest,
Whom rolling clouds of incense half conceal,
By gilded robes increased,
Mutter and sign, and proudly prostrate kneel;
Not pomp, nor song, nor bended knee
Shall bring them any nearer Thee.

"I would not hold
Therefore that those who worship still where they,
In dear dead days of old,
Their distant sires knelt once and passed away,
May not from carven stone,
High arching nave and reeded column fine,
And the thin soaring tone
Of the keen organ catch a breath divine;
Or that the immemorial sense
Of worship adds not reverence.

"But by some bare
Hill-side or plain, or crowded city street,
Wherever purer spirits are,
Or hearts with love inflamed together meet,
Rude bench and naked wall,
Humble and sordid to the world-dimmed sight,
On these shall come to fall
A golden ray of consecrating light,
And Thou within the midst shall there
Invisible receive the prayer."

—*A Hymn in Time of Idols.*

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WORSHIP—WITH RITUAL AND WITH SIMPLICITY.

"At the close of the day, when the members of the household had assembled in a wide circle round the fire, my uncle 'took the Book,' and I witnessed, for the first time, family worship conducted in Gaelic. . . . . The concluding evening prayer was one of great solemnity and unction. I was unacquainted with the language in which it was couched; but it was impossible to avoid being struck, notwithstanding, with its wrestling earnestness and fervour. The man who poured it forth evidently believed there was an unseen ear open to it, and an all-seeing presence in the place, before whom every secret thought lay exposed. The entire scene was a deeply impressive one; and when I saw, in witnessing the celebration of high mass in a Popish cathedral many years after, the altar suddenly enveloped in a dim and picturesque obscurity, amid which the curling smoke of the incense ascended, and heard the musically-modulated prayer sounding in the distance from within the screen, my thoughts reverted to the rude Highland cottage, where, amid solemnities not theatric, the red umbry light of the fire fell with uncertain glimmer upon dark walls, and bare black rafters, and kneeling forms, and a pale expanse of dense smoke, that, filling the upper portion of the roof, overhung the floor like a ceiling, and there arose amid the gloom the sounds of prayer truly God-directed, and poured out from the depths of the heart; and I felt that the stoled priest of the cathedral was merely an artist, though a skilful one, but that in the 'priest and father' of the cottage there was the truth and reality from which the artist drew."—HUGH MILLER.

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DOUBT.

"Who but has seen
Once in his life, when youth and health ran high,
The fair, clear face of truth
Grow dark to his eye?
Who but has known
Cold mists of doubt and icy questionings
Creep round him like a nightmare, blotting out
The sight of better things?

"A hopeless hour,
When all the voices of the soul are dumb,
When o'er the tossing seas
No light may come,
When God and right
Are gone, and seated on the empty throne
Are dull philosophies and words of wind,
Making His praise their own?

. . . . . .

"Until at last,
For some blest souls, but never here for all,
Burns out a sudden light,
And breaks the thrall,
And doubt has fled,
And the soul rises, with a clearer sight
For this its pain, its sorrow, its despair,
To God and truth and right."—*Doubt.*

"All travail of high thought,
All secrets vainly sought,
All struggles for right, heroic, perpetually fought.

. . . . . .

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DOUBT.

"Doubt is not only permitted, it is commanded by reason itself in the employment and legitimate application of our different faculties."—V. COUSIN.

"If our era is the Era of Unbelief, why murmur under it; is there not a better coming—nay, come? As in long-drawn systole and long-drawn diastole, must the period of Faith alternate with the period of Denial. . . . . Such transitions are ever full of pain: thus the eagle when he moults is sickly, and to attain his new beak must harshly dash off the old one upon rocks."—CARLYLE.

"Such a denial, however, of what was once believed, but could be honestly believed no longer, so far from being the destruction, is in reality the vital principle of all religion. . . . . There is an atheism which is unto death, there is another atheism which is the very life-blood of all true faith. It is the power of giving up what in our best, our most honest moments, we know to be no longer true; it is the readiness to replace the less perfect, however dear, however sacred it may have been to us, by the more perfect, however much it may be detested, as yet, by the world. It is the true self-surrender, the true self-sacrifice, the truest trust in truth, the truest faith. Without that atheism religion would long ago have become a petrified hypocrisy; without that atheism no new religion, no reform, no reformation, no resuscitation, would ever have been possible; without that atheism no new life is possible for any one of us. . . . . There are moments in our life when those who seek most earnestly after God think they are

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"These in the soul do breed
Thoughts which, at last, shall lead
To some clear, firm assurance of a satisfying creed."
—*The Beginnings of Faith.*

CONSCIENCE.

"Or if you should answer, For each
God has set a sure mentor within, with power to convince and teach;
Yet it speaks with a changeful voice, which alters with race and clime;
Nay, even in the self-same lands is changed with the changes of time."—*Evensong.*

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forsaken of God; when they hardly venture to ask themselves, Do I then believe in God, or do I not?

"Let them not despair, and let us not judge harshly of them; their despair may be better than many creeds.

. . . . . .

"If there are but a few here present who understand what I mean by honest atheism, and who know how it differs from vulgar atheism, ay, from dishonest atheism, I shall feel satisfied, for I know that to understand that distinction will often help us in the hour of our sorest need. It will teach us that, while the old leaves, the leaves of a bright and happy spring, are falling, and all seems wintry, frozen, and dead within and around us, there is, and there must be a new spring in store for every warm and honest heart. It will teach us that honest doubt is the deepest spring of honest faith, and that he only who has lost can find."—MAX MÜLLER.

CONSCIENCE.

"Conscience is a cloak that covers every hole, and has withal the quality that it can be turned according to the wind: at present, when the wind is cross, you must put the cloak on the other shoulder."—MUSÆUS.

"'Must I not act according to the dictates of my conscience?' 'By no means, my conscientious friend, unless you are quite sure that yours is not the conscience of an ass.'"—RUSKIN.

"Conscience in Sparta commanded people to steal. Conscience in America builds prisons for thieves. Conscience used to forbid taking interest on loans. Money-lenders now worship God, build churches, and sustain missions on the interest of their capital. Conscience

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COMPENSATION.

"What is this bar that Nature loves to place
Before the too aspiring heart and brain,—
Bringing down goodly hopes to deep disgrace,
Keeping high pleasure balanced by low pain,
Pure thoughts by secret failings, subtler joys
With grosser sense or hopeless depths of woe?

. . . . . .

"Some hidden discords sweeten every strain;
No virtue is, where is no power to fall,
Nor true delight without a touch of pain."
—*Caged.*

"In this poor life
Things are double, each against each."
—*In the Park.*

"Old tastes are lost, old thoughts grow strange,
Old longings gradually change,
Old faiths seem no more dear or true,
Lost in the full light of the new.

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once carried on the slave trade, and established the institution in America. Conscience at last rose against it, declared it 'the sum of all villanies,' and poured out blood and treasure to overthrow it. Conscience hung John Brown; and it made John Brown willing to be hung. Conscience crucified Jesus; and conscience deified Him because He was willing to die for the ideal of right. Conscience built the Inquisition; and conscience made men strong to bear its tortures. Thus it appears that conscience gives contradictory statements, and is not, by any means, the same all over the world." —M. J. SAVAGE.

COMPENSATION.

"Every way we look we see even-handed nature administering her laws of compensation."—ALEXANDER SMITH.

"But the sure years reveal the deep remedial force that underlies all facts. The death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, which seemed nothing but privation, somewhat later assumes the aspect of a guide or genius; for it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life, terminates an epoch of infancy or of youth which was waiting to be closed, breaks up a wonted occupation, or a household, or style of living, and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character. It permits or constrains the formation of new acquaintances, and the reception of new influences that prove of the first importance to the next years; and the man or woman who would have remained a sunny garden-flower, with no room for its roots and too much sunshine for its head, by the falling of the walls and the neglect of the

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. . . . . .

"Though much be taken, much is left,
Not all forsaken nor bereft;
From change on change we come to rest,
And the last moment is the best."—*Loss and Gain.*

THE HIGHER CHARITY.

"Call no faith false which ere has brought
  Relief to any laden life,
Cessation from the pain of thought,
  Refreshment 'mid the dust of strife.

"What though the thing to which they kneel
  Be dumb and dead as wood or stone,
Though all the rapture which they feel
  Be for the worshipper alone?

"They worship, they adore, they bow
  Before the Ineffable Source, before
The hidden soul of good; and thou,
  With all thy wit, what dost thou more?"
—*Tolerance.*

INSPIRATION.

"Yet God is not silent indeed;
  Not seldom from every page—
From the lisping story of old
  To the seer with his noble rage;

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gardener, is made the banian of the forest, yielding shade and fruit to wide neighbourhoods of men."—EMERSON.

THE HIGHER CHARITY.

"The pious of all nations have a share in the future world."—*The Talmud.*

In the *Bhagavad Gita* the Infinite Spirit, Brahma, is made to say: "They who serve other gods with a firm belief, in doing so involuntarily worship me. I am he who partaketh of all worship, and I am their reward. I am the soul which standeth in the bodies of all beings."

"As a man has around his own soul his proper corporeal form, developed by that soul and owned by none besides; so should he wear his peculiar creed, woven by his own spirit, suiting his psychological figure, adapted to the exigencies of his life-work, and not the gift, loan, or stolen property of any other man."—JOHN SMART.

INSPIRATION.

"Inspiration reveals itself in various forms, modified by the country, character, education, and peculiarity of him who receives it, just as water takes the form and the colour of the cup into which it flows, and must needs mingle with the impurities it chances to meet. Thus

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"From the simple life divine,
With its accents gentle and true,
To the thinker who formed by his learning
And watered the faith as it grew:

"All are fired by the Spirit of God,
Nor true is the doubt you teach,
That God speaks not to all men the same,
But differs 'twixt each and each.

. . . . . .

"Not only through Christ long since,
And the teachers of ages gone,
But to-day He speaks, day by day,
To those who are toiling on.

. . . . . .

"For I like not his creed, if any there be,
Who shall dare to hold
That God comes to us only at times,
Far away in the centuries old."—*Evensong.*

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Minos and Moses were inspired to make laws; David to pour out his soul in pious strains, deep and sweet as an angel's psaltery; Pindar to celebrate virtuous deeds in high heroic song; John the Baptist to denounce sin; Gerson and Luther and Böhme, and Fenelon and Fox, to do each his peculiar work, and stir the world's heart, deep, very deep. Plato and Newton, Milton and Isaiah, Leibnitz and Paul, Mozart, Raphael, Phidias, Praxiteles, Orpheus, receive into their various forms the one Spirit from God most high. It appears in action not less than speech. The Spirit inspires Dorcas to make coats and garments for the poor, no less than Paul to preach the Gospel."—THEODORE PARKER.

"Even the Old Testament teaches that certain men were inspired of God to work in linen and brass, and cedar and gold. Why not, then, Shakespeare and Michael Angelo, and Socrates and Epictetus, make good a claim to think and work by the inspiration of God?

"Let us see. All truth, of whatever kind or degree, is from God. All light is from the sun. Whether it shine from moon or planet; whether it be reflected by brook or mirror; whether it stray, a broken beam, into some prison cell; whether it flare in the gas-light, or glow in the coal of our evening grate,—all light is, first or last, just so much sunlight. So, whether a truth be in Bible or science, Christianity or Paganism, on the banks of the Jordan or the Ganges, wherever found, and by whatever path it come, being true, it must be from God."
—M. J. SAVAGE.

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WINTERSLOW HUTT AND HAZLITT —UNWRITTEN BOOKS.

A SLEEPY little cathedral city teaches one used to the life of a bustling town to look for simple pleasures in trifling occurrences. Instead of feverishly noting the changes of busy life, one gets sufficient healthy excitement from the contents of the morning post-bag. Perchance it contains a volume for review, proof-sheets from the publishers, or a bundle of magazines and papers from across the Atlantic, not to name letters from friends near and distant. From such a receptacle of excitement, then, it was my good fortune the other morning to draw out the following epistle from my old friend Rigby:—

"Can you give me a bed? and will you give me a day? I want you to show me Winterslow—Winterslow Hutt, where Hazlitt wrote. I am busy on some literary stuff having to do with Hazlitt, but cannot get sufficiently into the spirit of the matter. Let us creep together to his old quarters in search of the necessary inspiration."

And so it chanced that Rigby came—and we went; tramped the six miles, as we had before done many a six miles in the good old days when we were younger, and a trifle more enthusiastic about those quiet nooks of the country where great men had stood up to live, and laid down to die.

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We had an enjoyable hour together the evening Rigby arrived, searching out what we could find about Hazlitt's connection with the Hutt. Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt's memoirs of his grandfather helped us pretty considerably; but I think no scrap was pounced upon by us with greater avidity than that which told of the visit of Charles and Mary Lamb to Winterslow; not to the Hutt, but to the old house in the village, where Hazlitt and his wife resided previous to the sale of the property. We were as pleased as any two hero-worshippers could possibly be at the idea of Lamb and his sister wandering about the dreary, short-grassed stretches, gathering mushrooms, with which to flavour the hashed mutton which Hazlitt used to provide for his guests' repast.

We turned over the pages of the 1850 edition of Hazlitt's essays, to which his son had given, as title, *Winterslow: Essays and Characters written there*, and decided that, whatever others may choose to think of the preface, it answered our purpose, inasmuch as it referred to the place of our forthcoming pilgrimage, and to the hero of the hour;* and in Hazlitt's other volume, yclept

* "Winterslow is a village of Wiltshire, between Salisbury and Andover, where my father, during a considerable portion of his life, spent several months of each year, latterly at an ancient inn on the Great Western Road, called Winterslow Hutt. One of his chief attractions hither were the noble woods of Tytherleigh, or Tudorleigh, round Norman Court, the seat of Mr. Baring Wall, M.P., whose proffered kindness to my father, on a critical occasion, was thoroughly appreciated by the very sensitiveness which declined its acceptance, and will always be gratefully remembered by myself. Another feature was Clarendon Wood—whence the noble family of Clarendon derived their title—famous besides for the Constitutions signed in the palace which once rose proudly amongst its stately trees, but of which scarcely a vestige remains. In another direction, within easy distance, gloams Stonehenge, visited by my father, less, perhaps, for its historical associations, than for its appeal to the imagination, the upright stones seeming in the dim twilight, or in the drizzling mist, almost continuous in the locality, so many spectre-Druids, moaning over the past, and over their brethren prostrate about them. At no great distance, in another direction, are the fine pictures of Lord Radnor, and somewhat further, those

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Sketches and Essays, we found this charming confession in his gossip "On a Sun-dial": "What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus, 'with light-winged toys of feathered idleness,' to melt down hours to moments."

Rigby had not bargained for the desolate walk he got the following morning, when we tramped along mile after mile over the monotonous chalk and flint road, flanked on either side by uninterrupted stretches of unfenced down-land, fit only for an occasional sheep-nibble. How bleak it must have been along this part of the road for the winter passengers in the old coaching days! It is uninviting enough now, with the sunshine upon it; and Heaven knows what it is when the north winds are abroad, in times of frost and snow.

At last we got to our destination. We need have had no fear of missing it, for it is the only house on the roadside for five miles. At first it seemed like a disappointment, for, as we approached, the only sign visible

of Wilton House. But the chief happiness was the thorough quiet of the place, the sole interruption of which was the passage, to and fro, of the London mails. The Hutt stands in a valley, equi-distant about a mile from two tolerably high hills, at the summit of which, on their approach either way, the guards used to blow forth their admonition to the hostler. The sound, coming through the clear, pure air, was another agreeable feature in the day, reminiscentiary of the great city that my father so loved and so loathed. In olden times, when we lived in the village itself, a mile up the hill opposite —behind the Hutt, Salisbury Plain stretches away mile after mile of open space—the reminiscence of the metropolis would be, from time to time, furnished in the pleasantest of ways by the presence of some London friends. Among these, dearly loved and honoured there, as everywhere else, Charles and Mary Lamb paid us frequent visits, rambling about all the time, thorough Londoners in a thoroughly country place, delighted and wondering, and wondered at. For such reasons, and for the other reason, which I mention incidentally, that Winterslow is my own native place, I have given its name to this collection of *Essays and Characters written there*; as, indeed, practically were very many of his works, for it was there that most of his thinking was done."—Preface to *Winterslow*.

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was that of The Pheasant Inn. On getting nearer, however, we saw, sadly mutilated, it is true, and bearing unmistakable indications of age, but none the less welcome, the large letters painted across one portion of the front of the house, WINTERSLOW HUTT.*

We sat on the covered bench in front of the door, in company with some rustics, who were sipping with evident contentment their glasses of "home-brewed," and were soon joined by the landlord, who had just come in from his labour in the fields. We put forth cautious questions as to the Hazlitts, but they met with no response. The inhabitants had never heard either of Hazlitt or the Stoddards; but they could tell of the lion which years ago had escaped from a travelling menagerie, and attacked the horses of the London coach as it pulled up in front of the door. And the worthy landlord took us within, and showed us the coloured engraving of the event which hung in the front room, with its bay window having seats all round. We wandered about the house, into this room and the other, and talked of the bad times to our willing attendant, who agreed with us that things were very different in the neighbourhood now to what they were in the good old coaching days. He told us that such was the isolation of the place, that in the winter time perhaps three weeks would elapse without his having a single caller. He had to eke out the meagre profits of the establishment with what he could get from a few acres of land near by, and so live as best he could. —— But he had never heard of Hazlitt, and could not recollect that any callers had ever made enquiries about him before; and yet, in the house in which he lived, perhaps in the very room in which we then talked,

* The house bears both names, and is spoken of chiefly in the district as "The Pheasant."

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that great master of nervous English* had penned some of his most notable essays.†

* "We are mighty clever fellows now-a-days, but," as Robert Louis Stevenson says, in his *Virginibus Puerisque*, "we cannot write like Hazlitt."

† "In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them, you only think how the persons into whose mouths certain sentiments are put would have spoken or looked. In reading Dryden, and others of that school, you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen. In this respect, indeed, some of his more obscure contemporaries have the advantage over Shakespeare himself, inasmuch as we have never seen their works represented on the stage, and there is no stage trick to remind us of it. The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the playbills in small or large capitals. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think still higher of Nature, and next to that, of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts; they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young; we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had everywhere, cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe everything to their authors, on this side barbarism; *and we pay them easily with contempt while living, and with an epitaph when dead!* Michael Angelo is beyond the Alps; Mrs. Siddons has left the stage, and us to mourn her loss. Were it not so, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres royal *on Salisbury Plain, where I write this* (at Winterslow Hutt, not far from the village of the same name), but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's 'stern good-night,' as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can 'take mine ease at mine inn,' beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood are there, and, seated around, discourse the silent hours away. Shakespeare is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on the altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the window; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bella-

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How literally in his case has the prophecy been fulfilled, if we apply it to the local fame which should have kept his memory green: "For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

We had, however, to make a hurried scamper across the fields to catch the down train at Porton Station; but we promised ourselves another visit to the neighbour-

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front soothes Matheo; Vittoria triumphs over her judges; and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation. I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner, out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past, which might as well be forgotten. Mr. Wordsworth has expressed this sentiment well (perhaps I have borrowed it from him):—

'Books, dreams, are both a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good,
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness may grow.

. . . . . .

Two let me mention dearer than the rest.
The gentle lady wedded to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.

'Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays.
Oh, might my name be number'd among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days!'

I have no sort of pretension to join in the concluding wish of the last stanza; but I trust the writer feels that this aspiration of his early and highest ambition is already not unfulfilled."—HAZLITT'S *Lectures on The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth.*

Barry Cornwall, in his *Recollections of Men of Letters*, says that when Hazlitt was about to write his *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, "he knew little or nothing of the dramatists of that time, with the exception of Shakespeare. He spoke to Charles Lamb, and to myself, who were supposed by many to be well acquainted with those ancient writers. I lent him about a dozen volumes, comprehending the finest of the old plays; and he then went down to Winterslow Hutt, in Wiltshire, and after a stay of six weeks came back to London, fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it, and with all his lectures written. And he then appeared to comprehend the character and merits of the old writers more thoroughly than any other person, although he had so lately entered upon the subject."

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hood, when we would explore Winterslow thoroughly—East Winterslow, Mid Winterslow, West Winterslow—and if anything could possibly be unearthed about the great man and his residence there, it should certainly be laid bare.

Of course, we talked in the evening. What else can rational beings do in the cosiness made up of drawn curtains, lighted lamps, tobacco, and a suggestion of fire in the grate (for the evenings are now and then chilly even in the best of weather)? Add to all this the fact that the guest is a congenial friend, not too often seen, and let who can make for himself a better Paradise. I need none.

We talked of the great man; great in his achievements, and certainly great in his disappointments; branching off anon into bye-paths leading out of the way along which we had started. Hazlitt's gloominess, we agreed, was but the necessary result of his fatal gift of introspection: he looked into his own soul, and saw what magnificent plans of life and work were lying there, and then he looked out at the possible of achievement, and, seeing how cramped and limited it was, he grew gloomy, and curled himself up into his own life.

RIGBY.—Another version, alas! of the story of the man who left the daisies at his feet, to go clutching at the stars. I was so taken, the other day, with an extract from a sermon, quoted by Mrs. Jameson—which, by the way, bears upon our subject—that I really believe I can repeat it you now:—"To be content within limitations is freedom; to desire beyond those limitations is bondage. The bird which is content within her cage is free: the bird which can fly from tree to tree, yet desires to soar like the eagle; the eagle, which can ascend to the mountain peak, yet desires to reach the height of that sun on which his eye is fixed—these are in bondage. The man who is not content within his sphere of duties and

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powers, but feels his faculties, his position, his profession a perpetual trammel—*he* is spiritually in bondage. The only freedom is the freedom of the soul, content within its external limitations, and yet elevated spiritually far above them by the inward powers and impulses which lift him up to God."

THE BOOKWORM.—Right happy must the man be who can earnestly and steadily pursue his ideal, content the while with every step he gives. The proverbial ideal-seeker is a strange mixture of daring enthusiasm and unmanlike fluster, and, in vulgar parlance, often "comes a cropper" in his haste.

RIGBY.—It has always seemed to me, especially when reading eulogistic book notices in the periodicals, that the greatest productions by far are those which have never seen the light, but existed only in the chambers of the mind, unsoiled by criticism either too friendly or too fierce. Think, for instance, of the romances woven by Hawthorne during those quiet years at The Wayside, and which died with the creative genius which gave them birth; and of the poems which sang themselves to Wordsworth's soul, but which Wordsworth never sang to the world.

THE BOOKWORM.—Coleridge,* you recollect, continually talked of the Epic, on the construction of which he intended spending twenty years; and Leigh Hunt, speaking of his father, said he believed "he wrote more titles of non-existing books than Rabelais."

RIGBY.—The world is full of dreamers and their dreams. The pictures we all "think of in turn, as we

* "His (Coleridge's) mind was in a singular degree distinguished for the habit of projecting. To project with him was commonly sufficient. The execution, of so much consequence in the estimation of others, with him was a secondary point."—JOSEPH COTTLE.

"Poor C.—but two days before he died, he wrote to a bookseller, proposing an epic poem on the 'Wanderings of Cain,' in twenty-four books."—CHARLES LAMB TO MANNING.

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run our eye through the pages of a favourite author, will never exist except in the imagination, and they will exist there as companions of those phantom works which Thackeray used to run off in his fancy as books which might have been written."* By the way, you have seen the announcement of the death of that brilliant young writer, Champion, whose two or three novels were spoken so highly of by those most competent to judge. Well, he left me some score or two of books from his shelves, and a bundle of manuscripts, which really are very curious, as indicating the manner in which he did his literary work. I have among them the skeleton of a tale, upon which he was busy when *John Inglesant* made its appearance, but which he then threw aside. His ground, he told me, but a few weeks ago, had been ploughed up both by Shorthouse, in *John Inglesant*, and by Edna Lyall, in her *In the Golden Days;* and so he had left the field in their hands, and gone seeking in other directions. If you care to see this framework I will send it you; it might prove interesting, if nothing more.

* CHARLES PEBODY.

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HAZLITT AGAIN—BACKBONE.

WILSON, who had been unable to join us in our pilgrimage to Winterslow, is, it need hardly be said, another votary of Hazlitt's. And so, of course, at our next meeting he must needs have all particulars given him of our outing.

WILSON.—Did you hear the organ?

THE BOOKWORM.—To what do you refer? There is no organ anywhere about Winterslow that I know of.

WILSON (rapidly running his hand across the volumes of Hazlitt on the shelves, and taking one out and reading).—"I remember once strolling along the margin of a stream, skirted with willows and plashy sedges, in one of those low, sheltered valleys on Salisbury Plain, where the monks of former ages had planted chapels and built hermits' cells. There was a little parish church near, but tall elms and quivering alders hid it from my sight, when all of a sudden I was startled by the sound of the full organ pealing on the ear, accompanied by rustic voices, and the willing choir of village maids and children."

THE BOOKWORM.—A good many waves of strange thought had passed over Hazlitt's mind in the time that had elapsed since the morning when, as a young man, he went to hear Coleridge preach, and got to the little dissenting place of worship as the organ was playing the 100th Psalm. He seems to have delighted in weaving associations round music of this kind.

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WILSON.—Hazlitt's life appears to have been very queer and morally unhealthy at times, as if some great governing principle were lacking.

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes; with all our admiration for his remarkable gifts, we are bound to confess that in many instances he appeared altogether devoid of backbone.

WILSON.—Of what?

THE BOOKWORM.—Of backbone. You know perfectly well what I mean.

WILSON.—I do know this, that your language reminds me very forcibly of the old lady who told her spiritual overseer, with tears in her eyes, that her only son died of a spine in his back.

THE BOOKWORM (treating Wilson's observation with the silent contempt it merited).—In life, as well as in literature, there certainly is need of a very decided moral backbone, to prevent a man flinging his heels about in all sorts of mad antics. The partition between greatness and madness is very thin; and for this very reason, "second-rate people mostly succeed: not fools, nor first-rate people." The middling man is he whose sanity prevents his genius making an ass of him; whose backbone takes the place of any great gift of intellect. It is what is qualified and ordered by the "real and substantive" that makes proper headway in every direction. One is bound, for instance, to esteem the boy who, finding, on his way to school one frosty morning, that for every forward step he gave he slid back two, reversed the usual attitude of the pedestrian, and, with back turned towards school, soon arrived there. Genius was evidently present with the lad; not flighty, however, but governed by strong common-sense.

The influence of Emerson is undoubtedly great on minds just properly tuned to the reception of what we find enunciated by him; many, however, would flounder

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about, and make sad havoc of the quiet order of existence, if they took literally his exhortations as to the pursuit of supposed Truth at all sacrifice, even to the extent of denying father and mother, wife and child.

WILSON.—Then again, some of our well-worn proverbs are, in their nakedness, as mad as the maddest utterances of seers and poets; but the intelligent sanity of the multitude (who are, after all, not such fools as Carlyle would have us believe) puts suitable clothing upon them, and they become worthy factors in the world's orderly progression. Take for example the saying, "He who tholes (endures) overcomes;" and that other, "To him who waits everything comes round." As they stand they are supremely ridiculous and mischief-making; but the practical mind, educated by daily experience, translates them into something of this kind: "He who *endeavours and* endures overcomes;" and, "To him who *works and* waits everything comes round."* How would the world appear in this nineteenth century, I should like to know, if, in the days gone by, men and women had done nothing but endure and wait? The endeavouring and the working are what have moulded our civilisation.

THE BOOKWORM.—Talk about cobbling shoes! "and it just aint nowhere" when a proverb-mender prowls about. But to return seriously to the "backbone" question. One of the sanest of modern writers †—and in a piece of criticism, too—pens the following: "He would be a noble benefactor of the human race who should teach men how to combine the simplicity of the savage life with the refinement and the cleanliness of the civilised. We fear it must be accepted as an unquestion-

* "To the persevering mortal the blessed immortals are swift," says Zoroaster; and Lord Clyde's life motto, always inscribed on the fly-leaf of his pocket-book, was: "By means of patience, common-sense, and time, impossibilities become possible."

† *The* Country Parson.

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able fact, that the many advantages of civilisation are to be obtained only at the price of countless and ceaseless worry. Of course, we must all sometimes sigh for the woods and the wigwam, but the feeling is as vain as that of the Psalmist's wearied aspiration: 'Oh that I had wings like a dove: then would I flee away and be at rest!'" Let a man read this in conjunction with Thoreau's *Walden*, and if he be Bohemian by nature, he will assuredly haste away to a wooden hut—unless, indeed, his own backbone, or, in default of this, the backbone of modern everyday life, prevents him. Many a man has seen the inside of a lunatic asylum for indulging in pleasantries less harmful than this would be considered. Alas, what a "red, curled leaf" in the autumn wind is a man deficient of moral backbone!

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A SKELETON FOR A NOVELIST TO CLOTHE.

TRUE to his promise, Rigby has sent me the manuscript; and as the author has gone to his long home, poor fellow! and was never known on earth by the name we have given him—Champion—there can be no possible harm in printing here the skeleton which once he had hoped to clothe with flesh and blood, breathing upon it at the same time the breath of life which only the true novelist knows how to breathe, to make it a thing of real and joyous existence. I handle the little roll of paper tenderly, and am carefully affectionate towards it; for is it not an indication of the artistic impulses which once animated a throbbing brain now cold and quiet?

And it appears to me that in giving to my readers this novel without flesh and blood, I am conferring on them a boon, the greatness of which they will, perhaps, the better understand after reading the following preliminary flourish, which I am candid enough to admit has about it a deal of the uncertain movement that characterises the natural appendage at the end of a healthy pig.

A great man once said, when wonder was expressed by a chance acquaintance at the meagreness of his library: "When I want a new book I make it." In these degenerate days (notwithstanding the glut of writers, of a

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kind), when a man finds himself gifted with imagination, he generally permits it to run riot in the productions of others, instead of wisely curbing it for his own use and to reasonable purposes;*—we hesitate to say, to the making of new books, for of such there is, verily, no end; and we take it, that if an author—a novelist especially—desires to practice the virtue of self-denial, he cannot start in a more beneficial manner than by putting restraint on his powers of production. (When shall we hail some meddling Malthus for the race of book-makers?) At any rate, let the producer of literature keep his effusions to himself, for a season at least, locked up in the airy chambers of his own mental mansion, and for his own use, pure and simple. Let him make books *for himself*. This, of course, is starting with the supposition that in some novels there really are to be found indications of the possession by their authors of true imagination.†

Of necessity, any continued entertaining of one's self "with the forced product of another man's brain" must pall sooner or later; and in some cases we may reasonably consider that a man may then find himself "much amused with the natural sprouts of his own." But, after all the second-rate leading-strings and baby's food with which a budding mind is fed and influenced in these days, it would be nothing short of a miniature miracle were it to assert itself in a full-blown work of art without further light and additional assistance. It must be cautiously guided and helped. As a

* "He may have been a very clever man by nature, for aught I know," said Robert Hall, speaking of a much-talked-of personage, "but he laid so many books on his head that his brains couldn't move."

† "I remember when some peering eyes of boys discovered that the oranges hanging on the boughs of an orange tree in a gay piazza were tied to the twigs by thread. I fear 'tis so with the novelist's prosperities."—EMERSON.

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mental exercise in the meanwhile, before attempting to complete in their own minds romances, rounded and finished in plot and detail, let our gentle readers pounce with avidity upon this plot of poor Champion's, and work it up in their most desirable fashion. They need not shrink from the proposed abasement, for there is ample room in such an exercise for imagination, realistic and airy, and plenty of scope for the development of legitimate powers of wit and sarcasm (both dangerous to meddle with, by the way); in short, there is place in this direction for the play of all the gifts which make this topsey-turvey world of ours what it is. No greater skill can be exhibited than that which clothes a skeleton with flesh and blood.

But, to pass on to the manuscript in question, the following is a faithful transcript of what lies before me in its unfinished state, the result of much erasure and correction; and it indicates, to me at least, how carefully each trifling success of the dead novelist had been built up with infinite labour and much painstaking.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTER.

Thomas Vaughan ("Eugenius Philalethes").—Personality sufficiently interesting as a study.—Eminent writer and philosopher; brother to "Silurist." Born at Scethrog, near Brecon, 1621 (*query*, 1612); educated under Mr. Herbert, rector of Llangattock; subsequently went to Jesus College, Oxford, where he took his B.A.—Entered the Church; became rector of Llansantfraed; was of irregular life, and retired at last to his *Alma Mater*, to study astrology and to search for the philosopher's stone.—Ousted from his living by the Cromwellites, *alias* Propagators, on account of his known Royalist sympathies; was a great admirer of the writings of C. Agrippa, and acknowledged that, under God, he

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owed his principles of philosophy to him.—Accompanied his patron, Sir R. Murray, Secretary of State for Scotland (who was also passionately fond of chemistry), to Oxford, when the Court removed there in 1665 to avoid the plague; but after staying there a few days, retired to Albury, in the neighbourhood, *where he died without issue, on the 27th February, 1665.* (See Poole's *History of Brecon*, 1876).

Thomas Vaughan was a contemporary of the great English Rosicrucian, Robert Fludd; and the strangest part of his history (as we find remarked by a writer in 1749) is, that *he is "believed by those of his fraternity to be living even now; and a person of great credit, at Nuremburg, in Germany, affirms that he conversed with him but a year or two ago.* Nay, it is further asserted," continues the said author, "that this very individual is the President of the Illuminated in Europe, and that he sits as such in all their annual meetings."* (Contrast this with previous account of Vaughan's death at Albury.) Vaughan, according to the report of the philosopher, Robert Boyle, and of others who knew him, was a man of remarkable piety, and of unstained morals. (Contrast this with "irregular life" just recorded.) He wrote and edited several works upon the secrets of the philosophers; among others: *Introitus apertus ad occlusum Regis Palatium; Lumen de Lumine; Magia Adamica;* and *Anima Magica Abscondita*, all advancing peculiar theories concerning the seen and the unseen. (See *The Rosicrucians*, by Jennings.)

A modern writer throws out doubts as to the poetic gifts of Henry Vaughan ("Silurist"), and deems that

* From an interesting second-hand catalogue, now lying before me, I extract the following item: "*Long Livers*, a Curious History of such Persons of both sexes, who have lived several Ages, and grown Young again, with the Rare Secret of Rejuvenescency of Arnoldis di Villa Nova, by Eugenius Philalethes. 8vo., old calf, 1722."

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our hero, Thomas Vaughan, was really the author of *Olor Iscanus* (The Swan of Usk), as well as of other poems, which he published under the name of his brother Henry, with the addition "Silurist."

In Wood's *Athen. Oxon.*, Thomas Vaughan is described as "A great chemist, a noted son of the fire, an experimental philosopher, a zealous brother of the Rosicrucian fraternity, an understander of some of the Oriental languages, and a tolerable good English and Latin poet. He was neither Papist nor Sectary, but a true, resolute Protestant in the best sense of the Church of England."

SCENE OF THE PRINCIPAL INCIDENTS.

The charming country around Brecon, in South Wales, in the midst of which are the spots once loved by Thomas Vaughan.

> "Sage Nature is not bound to sympathise
> With every passion of a single soul;"

but she often does in a marvellous manner; or is it rather that the soul itself, moved by external influences, is drawn quietly, but surely, into sympathy with nature in her various moods and aspects?—call them passing passions if you will! In this neighbourhood, then, Vaughan could look from the quiet little church of Llansantfraed towards the surrounding hills, upon which sunshine and shadow alternately played; or he could wander along the banks of the Usk,* or lie in the

* "Garlands and songs and roundelayes,
Mild dewie nights, and sunshine dayes,
The turtle's voyce, joy without fear,
Dwell on thy bosome all the year!

. . . . . .

"The factour-wind from far shall bring
The odours of the scattered spring,
And, loaden with the rich arreare,
Spend it in spicie whispers here."—*Olor. Isc.*

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fragrant meadows, thinking the while on the unsolved problems of existence, or, perchance, pouring out his soul in verse.

Mem.:—Harmony or contrast, as called for by the course of the story, in plenty here; alchemy and storms, poetry and sunshine, pious aspirations and natural beauty.

BOOKS TO BE DIPPED INTO IN ODD HOURS BETWEEN COMPOSITION.

Thomas Vaughan's Philosophical Works.

Henry Vaughan's Poems, especially *Sacred Poems and Pious Ejaculations.*

Any volumes containing Breconshire stories or traditions.

Phillips's *Civil Wars in Wales and the Marches.*

Jones's *History of Breconshire.*

Poole's *ditto.*

The Rosicrucians, by Jennings.

Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled.*

Odd volumes on Magic and Alchemy (Howitt's and others).

The Secretes of Alexis.

Walton's *Complete Angler.*

Collier's Works on the Stage, &c.

Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy.*

Bardsley's *Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature*, &c.

EARLY DAYS AND LOVE.

Messenger one morning to Newton (or Scethrog) from the Rev. Mr. Herbert, of Llangattock, summoning the boys, Henry and Thomas, back to their studies—holidays over.

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These holidays had been full of strange experiences to Thomas Vaughan. One day he had picked up in the house an old copy of *The Secretes of the Reverende Maister Alexis of Piemount*, the reading of which had curiously influenced him, especially that part of it which taught the mode of raising the Devil. Another day, out whipping the Usk with his trout-rod, he had fallen in with a strange angling companion—Puritan and Republican, yet, withal, peculiarly interesting—his quaint language that of Walton's *Angler*, or Mrs. Bray's *Trelawny of Trelawne*. (See also Bardsley's *Puritan Nomenclature*.) This angler a widower; lately come to the neighbourhood, from London, where he had amassed a comfortable fortune in following his calling of goldsmith; had purchased a neighbouring estate; had an only daughter (*query*, attractive, pretty, charming, or what?), whom Vaughan one day meets in company with her father; they become acquainted; love.

And so the boy returns to his studies with these two secrets in his possession, either of them sufficient in itself to make a young man passing rich:—he could raise the Devil when necessary, and he loved the quiet Puritan maiden.

At Llangattock solitary musings and poetising. *Item:* In Llangattock there is a remarkable cavern, called Eglwys Faen; there are also the remains of a so-called Druidical monument, a *cromlech*.—Fit surroundings to encourage Vaughan in his love of the mysterious.

The brothers, Thomas and Henry, thoroughly imbued with loyalty to the King, both at home and at Llangattock. Contrast this with the sentiments of the father of the fair one loved by Thomas. (*Query*, shall both brothers love the same little maiden?)

Items to be made much of:—Llangorse Lake, near Scethrog, calm and beautiful in its nest between the hills; and the sports of May-day, not yet denounced.—

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Special opportunity afforded by the latter item to bring colour and life into the picture—*the* event of the year to a sleepy little Welsh village—frowned upon, of course, by the retired goldsmith.

Points to be considered:—Can we make this Puritan acquainted with Izaak Walton? Both fond of angling. (Walton, by the way, described as a "sempster," residing from 1628 to 1644 in Chancery Lane.) Shall we make a spy of the man, keeping a quiet eye upon the Vaughans and other Royalists in the neighbourhood?

Item to be used:—Shakespeare visited Brecon, and found, in a neighbouring glen, called The Valley of Fairy Puck, the principal machinery of his *Midsummer Night's Dream.* (Consult the biographical sketch prefixed to the Rev. H. F. Lyte's edition of Vaughan's *Sacred Poems,** from which the following is extracted: "The chief family residence of the Vaughans was the Castle of Tretower, in the parish of Cwmdû, and, when it was dismantled, Scethrock, or Scethrog, in the same neighbourhood. At this latter place Shakespeare is said to have paid a visit to one of the family, and his commentator, Malone, thinks that it was perhaps there that he picked up the word 'Puck,' respecting the origin of which some of his critics have been much puzzled. Pooky in Welsh signifies a goblin, and near Scethrog exists a valley, Cwm-Pooky, the goblin's vale, which belonged to the Vaughans.")

LIFE AT OXFORD.

Vaughan's love of the occult gets fed. Describe student-life in those days. He hears of Burton (author of *Anatomy of Melancholy*), seeks him out, and intro-

* Geo. Bell and Sons, 1883.

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duces himself.—His enthusiasm pleasing to Burton, who makes him welcome, and invites him to come often.—Make a picture of the knowledge-satiated Burton, and Vaughan, the young and enthusiastic seeker after knowledge.—Material here for contrast and description. Burton's conversation similar to his *Anatomy*. Arrange, for instance, that he should find out that Vaughan harbours a secret passion for some fair maiden, to accordingly quiz him in the language of his chapter on Love.

(*Mem.*:—Burton's residence was chiefly at Oxford, where, in his chamber in Christ Church College, he departed this life at, or very near, the time which he had foretold from the calculation of his own nativity; "which," says Wood, "being exact, several of the students did not forbear to whisper among themselves that, rather than there should be a mistake in the calculation, he sent up his soul to heaven through a slip about his neck.")

Make Burton to calculate his nativity on an evening when he and Vaughan are together; at the result he is in nowise cast down; tells his companion that life's secrets being tolerably exhausted, he is willing to pass through the gate to learn fresh and greater ones—is, in fact, going to see for himself what disembodied intelligencies have repeatedly told him of. Vaughan reckons the days feverishly as they approach Christmas-tide, 1639. He goes to Scethrog to spend the holiday, and whilst there a messenger arrives one morning from an Oxford friend, to tell him how Burton's death has fulfilled Burton's prophecy.—Conversation between the Puritan ex-goldsmith and Vaughan, on an evening immediately subsequent to the receipt of the news.—Scope for variety of talk, in the midst of which the simple-minded maiden asks Vaughan if he has calculated his own nativity.

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VAUGHAN'S APPOINTMENT TO THE LIVING OF LLANSANTFRAED, AND HIS LIFE THERE.

Query:—Is he to bring from Oxford a copy of Shakespeare's *Othello*, and lend it to the maiden of his love? (*Be careful as to dates.*) Consider, at this point, how the love matter really stood; what confession! what past progress! what present condition! His life here capable of much realistic picturing. See if erase previous mention of the May-games, to be used here?—carried on under Vaughan's smile, but frowned upon by his friend the Puritan.

Item:—Ordinance for cessation of such frivolities (?) not printed till 1644. (Consult Phillips's *Civil Wars*, pp. 67 to 69.)

Item:—Herbert Price represented Brecon in Parliament in 1640—a Royalist.

Describe Vaughan's dabblings in astrology and alchemy in his secluded home; his hopes and fears; his failures and successes.

Conversations in Puritan's home (between whom?) anent Vaughan—the man and his character—very clever, but in possession, undoubtedly, of devilish powers—the wrong man to be a shepherd of Christ's flock. The father thus, unconsciously, feeds his daughter's love for Vaughan.

Vaughan's repeated visits to this house; his views, as opposed to the Puritan's on all sorts of subjects; on the life of the people; theatres and stage-strutting; and Will. Shakespeare. (*Query*, if insert conversations of this kind as occurring during Vaughan's vacations whilst an Oxford student?)

VISIT OF CHARLES I. TO BRECON.

The battle of Naseby over (fought June 14th, 1645), and the hopes of the Royalists destroyed. Charles

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passed from Cardiff, through Gelligaer and Merthyr, on to Brecon, where he was entertained at the Priory by Col. Herbert Price.—The King had heard of the friendship between *Anatomy* Burton and Vaughan.—Sends a messenger to his "Most Loyal Subject, The Reverend Thomas Vaughan," bidding him meet him at the Priory. —The immediate and ready obedience of Vaughan, with whom the King confers privately on matters astrological. —As a result the well-known letter of Charles to his son, then in Cornwall (?).

Mem.:—Look up the life of Lilly, the astrologer, as to the occasions on which he was consulted by Charles as to the future.

(Plenty of scope at this point for dialogue, description, and portrayal of character.)

SUBSEQUENT TO VAUGHAN'S EJECTMENT FROM HIS LIVING.

"Vaughan was certainly a Rosicrucian adept, if there ever was one, led a wandering life, and fell often into great perplexities and dangers from the mere suspicion that he possessed extraordinary secrets."

Some little time after Vaughan's departure from the neighbourhood of Brecon, the grim old Puritan of Scethrog gets a gossiping epistle from an acquaintance in London—also a goldsmith—who relates in it an occurrence that had recently taken place, to the sore disturbance of his peace of mind. A gentleman had visited him with 1,200 marks worth of gold, which he desired to have changed into current coin of the realm.—(Use terms to express the singular purity of the precious metal presented.)—He had cross-questioned his would-be customer, who immediately departed, and left the whole of his wealth behind him, appearing to care only to make a speedy flight, as if fearing some awkward discovery.

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Mem. :—No suspicion to be in the mind either of the receiver of the letter or his daughter (love-sick and unhappy maiden!) as to Vaughan's connection with the affair.—(Room here for picture-making and odd incidents).

Note, on which to base the above narration:—"Francesco Picus, in his work *De Auro*, gives eighteen instances of gold being produced in his presence by artificial means; and Thomas Vaughan, 'Eugenius Philalethes,' going to a goldsmith to sell 1,200 marks worth of gold, when the man suspiciously remarked that the gold was too pure to have ever come out of a mine, ran away, leaving the money behind him."—*Isis Unveiled*, by H. P. Blavatsky, vol. 1, p. 504.

LAST DAYS.

Describe court life at Oxford, &c. Despite all—Vaughan's weaknesses and her father's Puritanism—his love remains true to him, in the quiet little Welsh hamlet. She hears of his having been stricken with the plague, and immediately leaves her home for Albury. (Paint, at length, the venturesome journey.) They meet—confessions—regrets—his death. If the picture needs any darker touches, these to be obtained from particulars of the dread pestilence.

Mem. :—See Rosicrucian theory of Vaughan's return to life. Room for imagination, in describing all sorts of ways in which this is done.—Shall he visit his old home, and meet his beloved? or do his crossings and re-crossings of the dark stream between life and death alter his views on these matters? Shall he meet and hold converse with old Burton on the banks of Styx? (Other queries *ad infinitum*.)

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JAMES HARRIS AND "HERMES"—CULTURE.

I MOST devoutly pray that no robbery (especially with violence) will ever occur in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral; for, loitering about in mysterious and inquisitive attitudes as we do, our conduct is certainly, to some extent at least, the object of notice, and, in case of the dreaded event, suspicion would naturally centre upon us. A passing tourist is pardoned a momentary gape, even if he has his mouth *very* wide open; but suspicion must inevitably connect itself with repeated gazings, which sometimes have only a short interval of days between them. Wilson and I have been down taking another good look at the comfortable old house just within the Close gate, in which lived and wrote "James Harris, Esquire, the author of *Hermes*." Now we are sitting together, quietly turning over the pages of the said "Philosophical Enquiry," which Wilson has taken from the bookcase. Here, in the Dedication to "the Right Honourable Philip Lord Hardwicke, Lord Chancellor of Great Britain," dated from the Close of Salisbury, Oct. 1, 1751, the author refers to his treatise as having "a farther claim to your Lordship's patronage, by being connected in some degree with that politer Literature, which, in the most important scenes of Business, you have still found time to cultivate."

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And so our talk took its turn in the direction of culture, which, we agreed, it should be the aim of all men engaged in business to graft upon their daily lives, to make them sweeter and more wholesome, by drawing from them the self-seeking and narrowness of outlook which too often characterise those who struggle with the absorbing cares of every-day occupation.

Our author, touching upon what he terms "the Dignity of the Consequences" (a good phrase, by the way, and worthy of the popularizer of "Sweetness and Light"), inserts the following story:—"When the fame of Heraclitus was celebrated throughout Greece, there were certain persons that had a curiosity to see so great a man. They came, and, as it happened, found him warming himself in a kitchen. The meanness of the place occasioned them to stop; upon which the Philosopher thus accosted them: ENTER BOLDLY, FOR HERE TOO THERE ARE GODS." "We shall only add," says Harris, after the above quotation, "that, as there is no part of Nature too mean for the Divine Presence, so there is no kind of subject, having its foundation in Nature, that is below the dignity of a philosophical inquiry."

WILSON.—I certainly admire the unmistakable manner in which Harris shows that, though a sage should sit in a kitchen, if he hath wisdom to impart, the gods are with him, and that to obtain their smile it is but necessary to "enter boldly."

THE BOOKWORM.—You make me remember what Oliver Wendell Holmes says in *Elsie Venner:* "When a resolute young fellow steps up to the great bully, the World, and takes him boldly by the beard, he is often surprised to find it come off in his hand, and that it was only tied on to scare away timid adventurers." I often think, in my quiet moments, of the opportunities for education and culture which in these days present

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themselves to the poorest in our midst, and how it is only necessary to take firmly by the beard the trifling difficulties which stand in the way, to discover their really unsubstantial character.

WILSON (laughingly).—I hope we are not entering upon a subject which our friend Harris would dub "below the dignity of a philosophical inquiry." We must most certainly, in all matters, preserve our natural dignity.

THE BOOKWORM.—I'm sadly afraid your present frame of mind is not favourable to severe philosophy.

WILSON.—Pray leave the severity out at the start. I have no doubt we shall both get earnest enough before we have finished; we generally do in these talks of ours.

THE BOOKWORM.—Name it not, Most Noble! But really, when important facts are around us on every hand, staring us, as it were, right in the face, and yet are unnoticed, it is time, I think, for one to wax a little warm. Look, for instance, at the magnificent educational advantages that present themselves just now to our youth, no matter how poor, but which are rarely utilised to their fullest extent. Now and then an enterprising and persevering lad does avail himself of what is placed within his reach of this kind, and, as a result, rises to a position of which he is pardonably proud, and concerning which his less industriously inclined companions are, in no vague way, envious. But such cases are really the exception. Indeed, the comparative neglect with which such absorbing topics as Individual Culture and the Earnestness of Life are treated, is excuse sufficient for anyone to refer to them in other than a dreamy fashion.

WILSON.—And yet, whatever mistakes—and some of them, I admit, are very serious—are made by our present national system of education, we must be content, for a while at any rate, to let it alone. So long as competi-

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tive examinations exist, undue "cramming" will run alongside of them with feverish haste and questionable results. But Dame Nature, in her jealous care for the survival of the fittest, is a sure hand at driving nails into the coffins of second and third rate individuals—and systems.

THE BOOKWORM.—But there is, of a surety, no excuse for anyone to stand aside out of the way of the great wave of universal culture which is sweeping over our present civilization. Goethe's great insight into the hidden motives of life enabled him to see clearly the inclination of men to content themselves with what is ordinary, and to allow the spirit and the senses to grow dead to the impressions of the beautiful and perfect. But at the same time that he lamented this he also saw means of correction. "*One ought,*" he says, "*every day, at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.*" As a foot-note to the great German's formula, which contains an enumeration of the essentials that are forcibly dwelt upon in modern culture, I would add a definition of the points of difference (sometimes but vaguely and lazily apprehended) which exist between mere education and what we term culture. Whilst the primary object of education is to bestow the necessary weapons with which one has to fight his way in the world, the true aim of culture is to enable one to use these weapons gracefully and with ease, and further, to provide what in the intervals of warfare should prove a suitable and rational rest for the combatant. Culture should rise upon and above mere education, and in every instance supplement it to the fullest extent.

WILSON.—Pray continue! I'm content to listen to-night. Let me divide Goethe's text for you: first, the music, the "little song." Don't fear for me; I'm going to smoke.

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THE BOOKWORM.—As you will. . . . . But the power of music has never been over-estimated, notwithstanding all the extravagant things that have been uttered in praise of it. For ages it has been the expression of the great heart of our country, and around it have clustered the stirring traditions of our ancestors' bravery and the deeds of daring they did. And then, to many an individual it has been a saviour, the only means by which the over-strained heart and brain could find relief. Without utterance of some kind the man of intense feeling becomes moody and degenerate; all in heaven and earth oppresses him, and shuts him in upon himself. But give him a safety-valve, whether it be a friend into whose ear he can pour his tale of trouble, or a musical instrument over which his extreme tension can expend itself, and lo! he is a new man, he is even as a child. Just consider for a moment what a man has in a musical instrument over which he exercises control. To his touch it throbs in response, lending itself to every passion of his soul. It pleads, it prays, it mourns; it rejoices and is glad, lifting up a voice of jubilant thanksgiving; it interprets all the mysteries of our sorrowing and rejoicing humanity; in short, it helps the seeking and aspiring soul as naught else can do.

The magical power of music is referred to in most of our old-world stories. In the *Edda*, Gunnar played on the harp so sweetly that women wept and men lamented. When his hands were bound in the serpents' den, he harped with his feet, and sent all the snakes to sleep but one. In the old Lombardy tales, when Dietrich played on his harp he that drank dropped his hand and spilt the liquor, and he that cut bread was interrupted in his labour by the knife falling from his grasp. In the *Nibelungen Lied*, Volker fiddled sweeter and yet sweeter, till men forgot their cares, and full many a careworn soul flitted forth into untroubled sleep. When Orpheus,

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searching for Eurydice, touched his harp, even Cerebus, the three-headed dog of hell, wagged his tail with pleasure; and the restless wheel to which Ixion was bound stood still; nay, all the punishments of hell were suspended. But a truce to such instances!

In my own hours of musical enjoyment my mind often recurs to the word-picture, alive, verily, as a picture should be, and breathing melodiously, which has been painted by the master-hand of Prime, in his *I Go A-Fishing*. You know it, of course.

WILSON.—I am sorry to have to plead ignorance. Is the volume near at hand?

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes, at your back as you now sit—green-papered boards.

WILSON (handing the book).—Find it, and read.

THE BOOKWORM.—Ah! here it is; I know the page pretty well by this time. (Reads the remarkable passage beginning:—"The memory of Sundays gone is the angler's best Sunday company when he is alone in the forest.")

WILSON.—He who wrote that was a scholar and a gentleman, and an artist to boot.

THE BOOKWORM.—Music often serves exalted purposes of a distinctly personal nature. Some years ago, before I knew you, Wilson, I had a friend who, during a prolonged period of spiritual darkness and mental uncertainty, kept his better nature alive by the simple music of his wife's voice. He would say to her, "Sing to me, dear!" and in the summer sunshine, or by the winter fireside, she would tenderly sing to him some such gem of faith and trustfulness as that beginning:—

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

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Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best,
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest;"

and the darkness would haste away.

A delicate ear, however, and a cultivated heart are necessary to revel in Nature's most subtle melodies. None but the solitary wanderer o'er hill and dale, through shadowy woods and by babbling brooks, can tell of the mysterious world of music in which the twitter and song of birds enhance the melody of singing leaves and murmuring waters, and make one realise more forcibly than ever that

"Somehow God is near."

The mere lap of the waves on the beach on a quiet summer's evening carries to the listening soul memories of more than earthly songs, heard in that other life we lived ere our pilgrimage began here—or are they rather, as I sometimes think them to be, not memories at all, but untranslatable prophecies of what some day, perchance, we shall hear, in some extended existence,

"In some unimagined Spring?"

The natural state of creation is musical: music attends the footsteps of Creative Wisdom. Where Divinest Power has been, there song bursts forth. Much has been uttered of the music of the spheres; but I sometimes like to listen to music from a more earthly direction, as did Carlyle, who, speaking of the fight of the brave man with Necessity, said that his very duel-strokes are musical.

WILSON.—They are often effective enough, anyhow.

THE BOOKWORM.—Then, as regards Goethe's second means of culture—reading—I hesitate to approach the subject; there is so much to be said in that direction. It would be a comparatively easy task to enumerate the

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endearing names given by reading men to their favourite books. Instead of so doing I would, however, at all times prefer drawing the attention of those who read to Ireland's charming volume, *The Book-Lover's Enchiridion*, which contains a selection of the wisest and wittiest sayings of notable men on the subject of books and reading. By this compilation, a labour of love in its best sense, Mr. Ireland has earned the gratitude of all lovers of good books.

There is certainly no culture apart from books; and I question whether there is any culture worthy the name which is not, to a great extent, the result of a particular affection for at least one of the world's best books. Not that I would, for a moment, limit the idea of culture, and make local what, in its very essence, should partake of the widest and most catholic interpretation. Culture carries with it the impression of breadth, as opposed to what is finikin and near-sighted—the world, and not the village. And thus narrowness, which is apt to result from *special* instead of *general* culture, is to be counteracted and banished.

There are plenty of really amusing instances on record of this narrowness of which I speak. An eminent mathematician once heard a reference made in conversation to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and he immediately asked, "What does it prove?" And a poet, in pointing out to a companion a London merchant-prince rolling along in his carriage, said, "Do you see that fellow? I will wager you he doesn't know how to make blank verse." Without the culture which enables one to see all round, there is to the mind "nothing like leather."

All who in modern times have attained to true greatness were keen students of books as well as of men: in many cases, indeed, what was gained from the study of man proved a necessary interpreter of the otherwise hidden wisdom of books.

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WILSON.—And, pray, what would you have one read at, say, the commencement of this culture-seeking?

THE BOOKWORM.—That would, in a great measure, depend on one's previous education. To some, even Todd's *Student's Manual* and Watts *On the Improvement of the Mind* would be best; to others, who have passed the "milk for babes" stage, I would say: Read Carlyle's *Speech at Edinburgh*, Emerson's *Essay on Books*, Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, and Frederic Harrison's *Choice of Books*. There are somewhat opposing views laid down in the utterances of these great men; but nowhere else can be obtained, of such choice quality, what is needed at the outset.

If, instead of talking quietly to you, Wilson, as I now am, I were in conversation with a young man who had just awakened to the fact that culture was in every way desirable of attainment, I should say: You will not fail to find, whatever your predilections are, that after much solid grounding in necessary subjects, you will be drawn to devote a goodly portion of your leisure to the reading of poetry and works which, if not in actual verse form, have about them all the delicate flavour of picked poetry. I would further say: Read, by all means, the best poetry the world has produced, not forgetting the selectest verse of the present day. And if, in any odd moment, you think you can string your sentiments or thoughts together in a metrical fashion, do so by all means; it may do you good, and it cannot do you very much harm. But beware of being deluded by a little culture; and, whatever you do, dream not of relaxing your hold on the stubborn work of the world to follow literature as a life-calling. There are very few roses to be gathered along the narrow pathway; but what an abundance of thorns! With all Rousseau's sentimental weakness, he was strong in much worldly wisdom when he decided that literature ought to be the thing reserved, the grand luxury of life,

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the blossom of the soul. Some time ago there appeared for sale an autograph letter of Tennyson's, which contained this sensible scrap of advice—especially sensible as coming from one who for so many years has successfully trodden the paths of poesy:—"Write verses in your leisure hours if you like it, but never let them interfere with your proper work in life."

WILSON.—And then what wealth of elevating power is possessed by a good picture!

THE BOOKWORM.—But we, in these latter days, do not stand alone in our perception of this truth. The "dim religious light" which had birth in old churches, and was such a valuable aid to the spirit of worship, was but the white glare of the sunlight, subdued and toned in its passage through pictured windows, in which the hand of the artist had cunningly worked his colours into harmony with the sacred traditions of the past.

And what beautiful pictures surround us on every hand!—the ever-changing clouds above, the mysteries of sunrise and sunset, the young life of spring-tide, the full richness of summer, the mellow ripeness of autumn, and the white purity of winter's snow. Such pictured glories are, alas! too often considered trifling; or else the mere mention of them *as such* is smothered, because men of power in the world's ways, who are so busy that they scarce realise that they live, speak slightingly of them, and term them "poetic and useless, and all that." Of course, such a *dictum* is heeded, coming, as it does, from the well-oiled machinery which keeps the world going—as it is content to go just at present. But to the young men of the coming generation we look hopefully for what we do not exactly find just now—for a due consideration of life as life, and not as a means to some farcical monetary accumulation or individual monopoly, which in the end has to slink aside and cover its head whilst the realities of Life and Death join hands.

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WILSON (in a meditative manner).—

"Take thou no thought for aught save right and truth,
Life holds for finer souls no equal prize;
Honours and wealth are baubles to the wise,
And pleasure flies on swifter wings than youth.

. . . . . .

Take thou no thought for aught; nor deem it shame
To lag behind, while knaves and dullards rise;
Thy soul asks higher guerdon, purer fame,
Than to loom large and grand in vulgar eyes.
Though thou shouldst live thy life in vile estate,
Silent, yet knowing that deep within thy breast
Unkindled sparks of genius lie repressed—
Greater is he who is, than seemeth, great."

After all, Burns was right; and the only aim in catching "Dame Fortune's golden smile" should be, not to secure

"A train attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent."

THE BOOKWORM.—There is one other thing about this pictured glory of the changing year. Though treated by the multitude with indifference, to the silent, listening soul it speaks clearly, albeit in a "still small voice," of the ever-living Power permeating Nature.

To the majority it is not given to live daily face to face with Nature's beauties; but we may hang on the walls of our homes a few good pictures, judiciously chosen, upon which we can look with brightened face and happy heart. It is absolutely necessary for the higher welfare of the poorest man, that he should have around him household gods, though they be but a few photographs of good pictures, and a handful of cheap reprints of the works of great writers. And what a paradise it is possible to make of a spot on which the sunshine falls! For a few pence a sufficiency of flower-

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seeds may be procured; and these, sown in a little earth, will give delight and colour to the darkest rooms and to the most straitened circumstances—will, in fact, bring the smile of beauty in upon the humblest domestic life, making it glad and joyful, and lifting it up to a higher plane, in which greater and more exalted things become possible to the struggling man and woman, made capable by God of eternal progression.

WILSON.—Then lastly, as our clergymen have it, we must dwell upon the final division of Goethe's culture-text—the speaking of the few reasonable words.

THE BOOKWORM.—These I would have as a reproach to the trivialities born of the daily wagging of wearying tongues. When we really come to a careful examination of the matter, we are bound to confess that, sensible and worthy as are many of the *written* words of the day, those *spoken* are, to use very mild terms, foolish and vacant. It has been estimated that a man's annual talk equals 52 volumes of 600 pages each of ordinary size and type. To look in all this for the "few reasonable words" would be, I am sadly afraid, but a repetition of the search for a needle in a bundle of hay. The importance of sane and upright speech is to be seen when we consider the influence of one individual on the other. The giving heed to the utterance of a friend sometimes changes the whole course of a man's life, lifting it up out of narrowness and selfishness into a world of extended outlook and magnificent self-denial—a veritable new birth unto things lovelier and more manly. To the desponding, dreams of more than eastern hue lie in a word of hope. Thereby a new career opens to the gaze; imagination is fired; nothing in existence seems beyond grasp; life becomes an outstretched fairy-land, in which all fancies resolve themselves into glorious possibilities. To the thoughtful and studious, a reasonable word from one of greater mental calibre solves

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difficulties which otherwise might clog the mind's workings for years, and lets floods of light into the darkened chambers of the soul.

WILSON.—There is one point on which you have not touched, and it is an important one. Closely dependent on this culture of which Goethe spoke, and to which you refer, will be one's power of successful work in the world, always provided, of course, that one's manliness is preserved, sweet and definite, underneath it all—not sacrificed to the inane artificialities of pseudo-culture, the ridiculousness of which has drawn down upon the very word "æsthetics" a shower of scornful abuse. Again I repeat, what at first sight might appear other than severe truth: *Closely dependent on this culture will be one's power of successful work in the world.*

THE BOOKWORM.—I admit fully the truth of your statement. Work, to be successful, and, of necessity, thorough, can only be one side of life, the other of which is rest; and rest can be obtained only through entire severance from the everyday world, if but for a few fleeting moments. To an active mind this severance is endurable only when joined to other occupation; for, to such, persistently recurring idleness is intolerable, and not to be imagined. What a world, then, is open to him whose culture in the branches referred to has so enriched his heart and mind that his kingdom of rest exists *in himself;* part and parcel of his very being. You recollect the scene in the parlour, in W. D. Howells's *Out of the Question*, in which Leslie plays the old-fashioned air on the piano, which occasions the following scrap of conversation:—

"*Blake.*—I'm very much obliged.

"*Leslie* (laughing).—And I'm very much surprised.

"*Blake.*—Why?

"*Leslie.*—I should think the inventor of a driving-wheel would want something a great deal more stirring

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than this German sentimentality, and those languid, melancholy things from Tennyson—that you liked.

"*Blake.*—Ah, that is just what I don't want. *I've got stir enough of my own.*"

Only through due observance of the laws of culture can one rise to the full manhood possible of attainment. The life of a man is too often twisted and gnarled by unfavourable circumstances against which he has to contend, and of which, alas! the world is too full. Culture, rightly ordered, developes the brightest and best characteristics; reveals the beautiful symmetry of the soul; shows, in short, how free and godlike the life is, notwithstanding all opposing and cramping conditions —and from unpropitious conditions it is sometimes impossible for one to escape who has a share in the active life of the work-a-day world. Daily contact with low aims and stunted ideals cannot fail to tell wofully upon even an expansive nature. But a suitable culture, persistently followed out, will do much to heal these breaches. An evening hour of lettered peace will set an effectual barrier against many inroads on the soul, and will brace it to go out into the world on the morrow to fill again its accustomed place. True culture also robs the individual of petty envy: it is a power which enables him to weigh true worth against the pounds, shillings, and pence of external and artificial existence. He looks serenely upon wealth; not scornfully; critically rather. If it be his, he welcomes it as a means of greater independence and more extended stewardship; after a fashion he even rejoices in it, and is glad. But if it be not his, the want of it sits lightly upon him; he has, at least, his own soul and its imperishable treasures, and he swears never to sell his manhood for baubles. Culture reveals to him an inner life, which, oftener than otherwise, is not enriched by what the world terms wealth.

You may depend that only through all-round culture

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can the determined man take his proper position in the world. "The world is apt enough to sneer at goodness when arrayed at its best; against virtue with a hole in its coat there is a double sneer—one for the goodness and another for the rent." Culture enables one in a measure to appear without "the rent," and thus one's goodness (or manhood, rather) gets but the single sneer.

Sit out, Wilson, there's a good fellow, that I may see you properly in the flicker of the fire-light! I am sufficiently in earnest just now to harangue you as the incarnation of the youth of the age—the conglomerate possibilities of budding manhood.

WILSON.—If you get much more in earnest, I must, as a matter of duty, remind you of the possibilities of spontaneous combustion.

THE BOOKWORM.—I would have you know, sir, that your sneers are beneath the notice of an individual possessed of the spirit of enthusiasm in a good cause. You are as irreverent as a Charles Lamb at a funeral. But a truce to frivolity! The young men of our days, with their golden moments laden with equally golden opportunities, very often advance a great deal of thoughtless talk about want of time. In a listless fashion they admit the desirability of the broadest culture; "but," say they, "we have no time." They will tell of the hours they spend in the office or warehouse, and of the impossibility of doing anything after the finish of their daily labours. And yet I am convinced, after much consideration of the case, that every young man, no matter in what circumstances he is placed, can, if he will, spare some little time every day for individual culture. Look at what a single hour a day is equivalent to in the year! It gives, roughly, 60 days of six hours each, or 10 weeks of six days each. And yet, viewed as single hours, all this time is not much; in the aggregate, however, it is abundant for the culture of

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which we have spoken. The labour of the proverbial busy bee can be looked upon either as a reproach or as an encouragement. It is calculated that this little insect sucks 2,500,000 clover-tubes to produce a single pound of honey.

We are apt to scoff at enthusiasm (eh! Wilson), but nothing can be achieved without it. It is told of more than one great artist, that he caused himself to be lashed to the mast in order to contemplate, for a longer time than was otherwise possible, the storm in its majesty and terrible strength. And, to name again the author who has provided us with a text for our talk, Goethe once said: "When I become acquainted with a man, my first enquiry is, With what does he employ himself, and how, and with what degree of perseverance? The answer regulates the interest I shall take in him for life."

And there are many intelligent men who, unknown to the observed, are thus following in Goethe's footsteps, and are quietly, but none the less surely, measuring the worth of the youths who rub against them in the market-place, on the exchange, and in the street.

WILSON.—As a last word to your culture-talk, I would say that no student of any kind should forget that a healthy mind (without which no true manhood is possible) can exist only in a healthy body. I like to remember the wisdom of Lycurgus, and the training he prescribed even for the maidens of Sparta. He ordered them to exercise themselves in running, wrestling, and throwing quoits and darts, so that thereby they should become possessed of strong and vigorous bodies. Neither mind nor body should be handicapped in the race of life.

THE END.

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DERBY AND NOTTINGHAM: FRANK MURRAY.

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IN THE STUDY AND THE FIELDS

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TO

MY FRIENDS

OF

THE FORTNIGHTLY

IN MEMORY OF

ATTIC NIGHTS

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WILTSHIRE DOWNS—GREATNESS NOT NECESSARILY HAPPINESS.

I AM getting to love these Wiltshire downs. At first, fresh from the district of sharply-defined hills, I scarcely knew what to think of them. They certainly were not mountains, and yet they obstructed the vision quite as decidedly as if they had been. But the associations born of daily existence—unless, indeed, there be positive disagreeables in the matter—tend to draw surrounding objects within the scope of the affections; and so I have got to like to sit at my study window, and do nothing but smoke and look out dreamily upon the landscape, with its succession of rolling downs, that, like so many over-grown mole-heaps, form the other side of our miniature valley. This little valley seems to have been hollowed out for the express purpose of providing a nestling-place for its tiny red-roofed church, its cluster of cottages, and the lazy stream, which hardly troubles to mend its pace as it glides along to the old mill, smothered in roses and honeysuckle. The subtle influence of this Sleepy-Hollow causes my dreams to be woven apace, whilst, alas! my work remains wanting in definite accomplishment. Somehow

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the very sheep, nibbling the short, sweet grass, and the shepherd's wheeled hut standing up against the sky, seeming in its isolation as desirable a domicile as the one Thoreau built himself by Walden Pond, add to the dreamy feeling which pervades the place.

"Don't you think so, Wilson?" I shouted in a playful tone, as that noted individual lounged into my nook.

WILSON.—Think what? I wish you wouldn't persist in making me jump out of my shoes in such an unceremonious fashion.

THE BOOKWORM.—O, don't be alarmed! I only suffered the question I was putting to myself to escape me. Don't you think that a man must be an out-and-out idiot to bend himself to any self-imposed task, when he can sit and dream with such a peaceful peep in front of him?

So the "rise" was got out of Wilson, and I smiled as I saw him prepare for a talk. And all the more did I chuckle because, by a careful stroke of strategy and the enunciation of views I really did not share at bottom, I had got him started on the war-trail. But I had by no means justly calculated his mode of procedure.

WILSON.—I suppose your continued out-looking on this bit of lazy life is the secret of the feeble pulse of your own productions just now. On the principle that it is the nature of the human mind to be great in proportion as it is acted upon by great incitements,* I conclude the reverse must also be true—no great incitement, no greatness.

THE BOOKWORM.—You should know, sir, with your careless references to greatness, that the great man is he who can call together the most select company when it pleases him.† You come to visit me at my bidding;

* WILLIAM GODWIN. † LANDOR.

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what more should I desire? Your selectness confers greatness upon your humble servant.

WILSON.—And you, too, sir, should bestir yourself sufficiently to remember that nearly all great artists and poets are modest. They know better than anybody else how far they fall short of what they intend, and so they don't put on airs.* Some of the greatest deeds have been done by men whose lives, in their own eyes, as well as in the opinion of the world, were a partial failure.

THE BOOKWORM.—Not always, by any means. The attitude of genius generally is:—All the earth seems full of ears for me alone; the woods, the hills, the skies are listening. It comforts itself even in the midst of neglect by saying: "To be great is to be misunderstood." †

And thus from friendly banter we passed to more serious converse.

WILSON.—I suppose it is best in this matter to admit that your view and mine are both laden with truth; and I have no hesitation in saying, equally laden with truth. When a man's nature indicates growth as opposed to mere carpentry, it begins to suggest the possible possession of genius, the twofoldness of which is so patent, that some have conceived that man must have two souls ‡—an ordinary one for every-day use, and one which in "some unimagined spring" hath

* ALDRICH. † EMERSON.

‡ "As Garrick, whom I regard in tragedy to be the greatest genius the world hath ever produced, sometimes condescends to play the fool, so did Scipio the Greek, and Laelius the Wise, according to Horace, many years ago; nay, Cicero reports them to have been incredibly childish. These, it is true, played the fool, like my friend Garrick, in jest only; but several eminent characters have in numberless instances of their lives played the fool egregiously in earnest, so far as to render it a matter of some doubt whether their wisdom or folly was predominant, or whether they were better entitled to the applause or censure, the admiration or contempt, the love or hatred of mankind."—FIELDING.

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"Worn a crown
Under the eyes of God." *

THE BOOKWORM.—I admit the truth of your conclusion; for the same lyric poet, for instance, can be at one time a brute and a genius; because his genius comes and goes like a disease, and instead of having it, he simply is possessed by it.† It is the story in which

"Some lonely soul, which walks apart, and feeds
On high hill pastures, far from herds of men,
Comes to the low, fat fields, and sunny vales,
Joyous with fruits and flowers, and the white arms
Of laughing love; and there awhile he stays
Content, forgetting all the joys he knew
When first the morning broke upon the hills,
And the keen air breathed from the Eastern gates
Like a pure draught of wine; forgetting all
The strains which float, as from a nearer heaven,
To him who treads at dawn the untrodden snows,
While all the warm world sleeps;—forgetting these,
And all things that have been." ‡

It is generally only in great minds that we see great inconsistencies of character: the rest are more of a piece, and one quality seems to drag another after it. §

WILSON.—And so, when the last word has been said about genius, we must be content to suffer it to be a law unto itself. ‖ We, however, get repaid; for the lucid

* MRS. BROWNING. † TAINE. ‡ LEWIS MORRIS. § BOYES.

‖ ALMA TADEMA once said to a well-known art-critic: "If I have obtained any degree of success, it is because I have always been faithful to my own ideas, followed the inspiration of my own brain, and imitated no other artist. Whoever wishes to accomplish anything in any career of life, must first of all be faithful to his own nature; and this, I may assure you, I have always been."

The Hon. R. H. LYTTLETON, in the elaborate Badminton Library treatise on Cricket, utters the following warning:—"A young cricketer may go to Lord's, and watch a great match; he

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intervals of some moody, deranged, and gloomy minds, like the lightning flashing out of darkness, reveal to us more than the life-long, steady, dim daylight of others.* Like the old prophets, these possessors of genius have had a message to deliver; they have cried vainly in the wilderness, they have fought in solitude with the foul fiends of doubt and unbelief, and have returned sorrow-stricken from the conflict. But their sorrow has made them kin to the white souls on the hill; and their speech has become musical, and laden with truths which but for their anguish had been unrevealed to mankind. The inspiration born of pain is in most cases reliable, and occasionally fraught with divinest truth. Man's Unhappiness comes of his Greatness. It is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite.† He may cumber himself

may see the giants of the game perform—W. G. Grace, Shrewsbury, A. G. Steel, and Barnes. He will wonder and admire; but let him beware of imitation, which may lead him into innumerable quagmires. In another walk of life—literature—you will find facetious writers who are fond of imitating the style of famous authors, and very amusing the attempts sometimes are; but it is easily seen that the points they successfully imitate are the roughnesses and the eccentricities which are frequently characteristic of great authors. An imitator of Carlyle, for instance, revels in the brusque eccentricities of the great man's style, but he never succeeds in portraying his noble qualities. It is much the same in cricket—genius defies imitation, and is only by poor struggling humanity to be admired. In the prime of his play, nothing in cricket was grander than the sight of W. G. Grace scoring two runs off a ball that any other cricketer would only have been too happy to stop. No school crack that understands his business would tell a youth to play certain balls as they are played by Mr. A. G. Steel, who sometimes adopts the most daring methods, and it is not safe to infer that anybody else can play in a like manner. It is so with hitting. Bonner or Ulyett can hit many balls which the great majority of other cricketers would only venture to play gently forward. Some critics, who are great at criticism, but great at nothing else, have been known to shake their heads at some of the methods of good players; but we can assure these gentlemen that real genius no more admits of criticism than it does of imitation."

* Boyes. † Carlyle.

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with science, clog himself with theories, constitute himself theatrical critic and social censor, fill his soul with unrelenting indignation, foster a combative and morose disposition, but heaven's dreams will never altogether desert him.

THE BOOKWORM.—There is one fact which we must not forget: man's unhappiness does not always arise from his having failed to measure the Infinite by the Finite. The unhappiness of men of genius often comes of a lack of faith in the grandeur, the beauty, and the goodness which their own works make more evident in nature and in human life.* And their misery is often developed into positive disgust and rank and absolute disappointment by the recognition, in famous productions, of the very thoughts which, when born in their own minds, they had hesitated to seize and call their own. In every work of genius we recognise our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson than this: they teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humoured inflexibility, then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side; else, to-morrow a stranger will say, with masterly good sense, precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.†

WILSON.—God deliver me from the faintest suspicion of genius! I prefer the life I live, happy in the simplest pleasures. The morning sun, as it slants into my room through the window round which the roses climb; the scent of the hay the breeze carries; and the song of the thrush in the clump of trees at the foot of the garden, are enough for me.

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* HAWTHORNE. † EMERSON.

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THE BOOKWORM.—Perhaps you are right. Well has it been writ of the responsibility genius brings to its owner: Neither has this an immunity. He who by force of will or of thought is great, and overlooks thousands, has the charges of that eminence. With every influx of light comes new danger. Has he light? he must bear witness to the light, and always outrun that sympathy which gives him such keen satisfaction, by his fidelity to new revelations of the incessant soul. He must hate father and mother, wife and child. Has he all that the world loves, and admires, and covets? he must cast behind him their admiration, and afflict them by faithfulness to his truth, and become a by-word and a hissing.* It is only so many varied repetitions of the fable of the fir and the bramble. "My head," says the boasting fir to the humble bramble, "is advanced among the stars; I furnish beams for palaces and masts for ships; the very sweat of my body is a remedy for the sick and wounded: whereas thou, O wretched bramble, creepest in the dirt, and art good for nothing in the world but mischief." "I pretend not to vie with thee," said the bramble, "in what thou vauntest of: but, I pray thee, tell me, when the carpenter comes to fell timber, whether wouldst not thou rather be a bramble than a fir?"

WILSON.—Well, where is the worth-living-ness of life to many if genius be thus burdened? and undoubtedly she is.

THE BOOKWORM.—But genius does not visit "the many," and cannot therefore detract from the happiness of by far the majority of human beings. Her coming is as that of the Star of Bethlehem—something to set wise men gathering their skirts together preparatory to admiration.

* EMERSON.

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WILSON.—Neither does this so-called supreme culture which is going on all around tend to the personal happiness of the individual. Because a great man speaks of the Unknown in some mystical manner, hare-brained mortals must rush, forsooth, like the small boy, to dig for the Infinite in the front yard! All over the modern world the cultured of this kind are betraying unwholesome discontent with their actual surroundings; and the worst of it is, this fever of wild striving to express a more inward and infinite sense is getting to characterise the works of every art. Music and poetry are labouring on all hands with great conceptions and aspirations; the love of the vast, and a grasping after the Infinite, intrude even into the home-quiet of our own hearths. The simple dignity of life is being replaced by sickly æstheticism of the soul—a far more serious disease than aught having to do with sunflowers and peacock-plumes. No wonder the cry Jean Paul Richter uttered to music has become well known and oft quoted. In his case, though, it was the throb of a mighty soul, not the puling, imitative discontent born of unwholesome culture. And how great the cry was, bursting, as it did, from *his* heart: "Away! away! thou speakest to me of things which in all this endless life I have not found, and shall not find."

THE BOOKWORM.—I agree with you, Wilson, in much you say, but I must also make a protest. You dwell too much on happiness—individual, personal happiness. Has it never struck you what a miserable failure the whole business of life would be if everyone selfishly pursued his own satisfaction? All grand and noble conduct and sentiment would be at an end, literally crushed out. Whatever fads may occupy the attention of Count Tolstoï, he is not very far wrong when he preaches the positivist doctrine of the renunciation of the happiness of the individual, so that the welfare of the race may

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be secured; for, amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another, and to a whole, that by stepping aside for a moment in selfish pursuit of personal pleasure, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing the satisfaction which sits with him by his fireside, and walks with him in his garden, and lies down by his side on his couch at night. The end of being seems best attained

> "By the duteous life which looks not forth
> Beyond its narrow sphere, but finds its work,
> And works it out; content, this done, to fall
> And perish, if Fate will, so the great scheme
> Goes onward."

The great deal always with the nearest;* and even for ordinary beings the safe plan is simply to do the task that lies nearest, whatever it may be, and never to permit pleasures to occupy the place of glorious duties. "The best things are nearest; breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things of life."

* EMERSON.

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DREAMING AND WORKING.

WILSON.—Our last conversation naturally opens up the interesting question as to how far a man's dreams should supplement his definite work, thereby making a completed existence. You recollect that leading article in one of the "dailies," to which I drew your attention a little while ago, in which the writer referred to the fact that Charles Darwin spent a good part of the latter half of his life lying on the sofa, apparently doing nothing, whilst in reality he was working all the time, even when he fancied he was not—was doing as much as the formed buds are doing in February and March. "They are not idle because they seem to be making no progress, and neither was he. The fallows, even, are not idle, and the subtle chemistry of earth, and air, and water are preparing them for the development of the seed that will shortly be committed to their keeping." This is, I think, as good an excuse for a dreamy "loaf" as any I ever came across—this and those lines of John Boyle O'Reilly, called *The Cry of the Dreamer*:—

"I am tired of planning and toiling
In the crowded hives of men;
Heart-weary of building and spoiling,
And spoiling and building again.

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And I long for the dear old river,
  Where I dreamed my youth away;
For a dreamer lives for ever,
  And a toiler dies in a day.

"I am sick of the showy seeming
  Of a life that is half a lie;
Of the faces lined with scheming
  In the throng that hurries by.
From the sleepless thoughts' endeavour
  I would go where the children play;
For a dreamer lives for ever,
  And a toiler dies in a day.

"I feel no pride, but pity
  For the burdens the rich endure;
There is nothing sweet in the city
  But the patient lives of the poor.
O, the little hands so skilful,
  And the child-mind choked with weeds;
The daughter's heart grown wilful,
  And the father's heart that bleeds.

"No, no! from the street's rude bustle,
  From trophies of mart and stage,
I would fly to the wood's low rustle,
  And the meadow's kindly page.
Let me dream as of old by the river,
  And be loved for the dream, alway;
For a dreamer lives for ever,
  And a toiler dies in a day."

THE BOOKWORM.—I think men who have the willing ear of the world open to them are answerable for a lot of nonsense born of their careless or incomplete utterances. I suppose O'Reilly had in his mind the saying of Goethe, that the undisturbed, innocent, somnambulatory state of production, from which alone anything great can come, is no longer possible, and that unless a man keep aloof from most things, and isolate himself by main force, he is lost.

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WILSON.—Uncommonly like Pascal's line, in which he declares that most of the mischief in the world would never happen if men would only be content to sit still in their parlours.

THE BOOKWORM.—I think it all resolves itself into this simple statement: a man's dreams are either the beginning and end of a lotus-eating existence, which brings forth no fruit of actual accomplishment, or else the preliminary and necessary period of preparative growth—apprenticeship, in fact—that precedes the doing which occasionally causes revolution in the world of art, letters, or morals. But dreams can never take the place of purpose-full work, pursued with definite aim and to a distinct end. "There is one plain rule of life, eternally binding, and independent of all variations in creeds, embracing equally the greatest moralities and the smallest. It is this: Try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances being both duly considered; and then DO IT." *

WILSON.—I certainly agree with you, as I do with Livingstone, who said that he found all eminent men hard workers. Eminent geologists, mineralogists, men of science, work hard, and that both early and late. I think it was Ruskin who, when a friend came to him one day with news of a man of genius, immediately inquired, "Does he work?"

THE BOOKWORM.—If men of genius dreamed less and worked more, there would certainly be less unhappiness among them. Their habits of introspection and their watchfulness over every gleam of thought or fancy passing the horizon of their inner consciousness, are sufficient to damn even an upright and ordinary soul; how much more so theirs, with its gossamer threads

* J. STUART MILL.

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and delicate susceptibility to every passing influence, however unsubstantial! The worst darkness that can possibly swoop down upon a man can be laid aside, firmly and definitely, by throwing oneself energetically into work which has no leaning towards the source of trouble.* It is the fashion just now to ignore a great deal of what Carlyle made the subject of his mighty insistence, simply, I suppose, because he did it to death. But none ever blew more decided trumpet-calls to Duty and to Work than did he. Let me repeat just one which lives with me in the solitude of my study, as well as when I tread the long upland stretches in my afternoon rambles: "Between vague, wavering Capability and fixed, indubitable Performance what a difference! A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us, which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible *Know thyself;* till it be translated into this partially possible one, *Know what thou canst work at.*"

WILSON.—When I run into town I often put up for the evening, as you know, at the home of our mutual friend, B——. The turn our talk has taken reminds me of a little of his autobiography, which escaped him on my last visit. He spoke of his day-dreamy, do-nothing youth and early manhood, and how, when he was ripe

* "Of all consolations, work is the most fortifying and the most healthy, because it solaces a man not by bringing him ease, but by requiring effort."—TAINE.

"'Tis the part of a coward to brood
O'er the past, that is withered and dead.
What though the heart's roses are ashes and dust?
. . . . . .
Down, down with the fetters of fear!
In the strength of thy valour and manhood arise,
With the faith that illumes and the will that defies.

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for conversion from these errors, it came about in this, by no means extraordinary, manner. He was one day turning over, in a listless fashion, the pages of Helps's *Essays written in the Intervals of Business*, when this passage attracted his notice: "Use the pen: there is no magic in it, but it prevents the mind from staggering about." The next day he was occupied in the same careless way in looking through a volume of the works of George Henry Lewes, when he chanced upon the identical words quoted in a passage which has lived with him ever since, and which certainly has done more than aught else to make him the successful man he now is. Let me see if I can find it. Ah, here it is: "There is in the present day an overplus of raving about genius, and its prescriptive rights of vagabondage, its irresponsibility, and its insubordination to all the laws of common sense. Common sense is so prosaic! Yet it appears from the history of art that the real men of genius did not rave about anything of the kind. They were resolute workers, not idle dreamers. They knew that their genius was not a frenzy, not a supernatural thing at all, but simply the colossal proportions of faculties which, in a lesser degree, the meanest of mankind shared with them. They knew that, whatever it was, it would not enable them to accomplish with success the things they undertook, unless they devoted their whole energies to the task.

"Would Michael Angelo have built St. Peter's, sculptured the Moses, and made the walls of the Vatican sacred with the presence of his gigantic pencil, had he awaited inspiration while his works were in progress? Would Rubens have dazzled all the galleries of Europe, had he allowed his brush to hesitate? Would Beethoven and Mozart have poured out their souls into such abundant melodies; would Goethe have written the sixty volumes of his works, had they not often, very often, sat down like drudges to an unwilling task, and found

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themselves speedily engrossed with that to which they were so averse?

"'Use the pen,' says a thoughtful and subtle author; 'there is no magic in it, *but it keeps the mind from staggering about.*' This is an aphorism which should be printed in letters of gold over the studio door of every artist. Use the pen or the brush; do not pause, do not trifle, have no misgivings; but keep your mind from staggering about by fixing it resolutely on the matter before you, and then all that you *can* do you *will* do: inspiration will not enable you to do more. Write or paint: act, do not hesitate. If what you have written or painted should turn out imperfect, you can correct it, and the correction will be more efficient than that correction which takes place in the shifting thoughts of hesitation. You will learn from your failures infinitely more than from the vague, wandering reflections of a mind loosened from its moorings, because the failure is absolute; it is precise; it stands bodily before you; your eyes and judgment cannot be juggled with. You know whether a certain verse is harmonious, whether the rhyme is there or not there; but in the other case you not only *can* juggle with yourself, but *do* so; the very indeterminateness of your thoughts makes you do so. As long as the idea is not positively clothed in its artistic form, it is impossible accurately to say what it will be. The magic of the pen lies in the concentration of your thoughts upon one object. Let your pen fall, begin to trifle with blotting-paper, look at the ceiling, bite your nails, and otherwise dally with your purpose, and you waste your time, scatter your thoughts, and repress the nervous energy necessary for your task. Some men dally and dally, hesitate and trifle, until the last possible moment; and when the printer's boy is knocking at the door, they begin. Necessity goading them, they write with singular rapidity and with singular success: they are

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astonished at themselves. What is the secret? Simply this: they have had no time to hesitate. Concentrating their powers upon the one object before them, they have done what they *could* do."

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WILTON HOUSE AND SIR PHILIP SIDNEY—BEMERTON AND GEORGE HERBERT.

YES, we decided we would take a day's leisure, and go to Wilton fair, where, our informant told us, we should find some hundred thousand sheep, which would all, probably, change hands before evening.

We laughed at the idea of going to a sheep-fair above all things; still, the prospect rather took our fancy—in the way, I suppose, that any excuse for being absent from school pleases the small boy to whom his lessons do not come "second-nature like." The weather just then was really delightful, with its quiet prophecy of autumn—a prophecy especially noticeable of an afternoon when, rambling over the downs, one is astonished to find how distinctly all rural sounds are heard at a distance. And the sun was so pleasant, shining down steadily, yet with tempered heat, upon one's back, which all the so-called summer through had experienced only the damp chilliness of an almost perpetual rain-pour.

We did go to the fair; and by quite an early train. Wilson declared it was the middle of the night; but, alas! he is not accustomed to rising with the lark.

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We walked in and out among the farmers, and listened to their bargainings and their talk of the harvest, and of the plenty of "keep" for the sheep. But lest we should be given credit for unpossessed wisdom in agricultural matters, I think it but just to confess that before long we were wandering about Wilton House, the beautiful seat of the Earl of Pembroke, with its pictures and statuary, and, above all, its associations; for here lived at one time Sir Philip Sydney; and here he wrote his "Vain and amatorious poem of Arcadia."* Here also resided for a while—in his youth, at least—Massinger (or, Messanger), the dramatist, whose father was attached as a gentleman to the establishment of Henry, second Earl of Pembroke, in which service he remained till his death.† It was assuredly a pleasing exercise of imagination to conjure up these two Phillips meeting each other occasionally, although their social positions were so different, under this same hospitable roof.

We have no desire to furnish a hand-book, however meagre, to Wilton House, and must therefore leave the catalogue of pictures and marbles to other hands. Suffice it to confess, even at the risk of a suggestion of Philistinism, that our attention was attracted more by the comparatively insignificant panels we found there,

* "Live ever, sweete booke, the silver image of his gentle witt, and the golden pillar of his noble courage; and ever notifye unto the world that thy writer was the secretary of eloquence, the breath of the Muses, the honey-bee of the dayntiest flowers of witt and arte, the pith of morale and intellectual virtues, the arm of Bellona in the field, the tongue of Suada in the chamber, the spirit of practice in esse, and the paragon of excellence in print."—*Harvey's Pierce's Supererogation.*

† It does not appear, however, that Massinger was born at Wilton, as the register of St. Thomas's, Salisbury, contains the following entry: "November, 1583. Phillip Messanger, the son of Arthur, baptised the 24th." Certainly not so pathetic an entry this as that other of a London parish, dated March 20, 1639: "Buried: Phillip Massinger—a stranger."

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pictorially illustrative of the *Arcadia*, than by the magnificent examples of the best works of Vandyck which make the house a very place of pilgrimage to artists and lovers of art.

Wandering about the pleasure-grounds and in the park, we found no mean enjoyment in recalling passages of the *Arcadia* which seemed to have been written descriptive of the scenery that spread itself before us, once very precious to the poetic soul of Sir Philip.

"There were hilles which garnished their proud heights with stately trees; humble vallies, whose base estate seemed comforted with refreshing of silver rivers; meadowes, enameld with all sortes of ey-pleasing floures; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so too, by the cherefull disposition of many well-tuned birds; ech pasture stored with sheepe feeding with sober securitie, while the pretie lambes with bleating oratorie craved the dam's comfort; here a shepheard's boy *piping, as though he should never be old;* there a young shepherdesse knitting, and withall singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to worke, and her hands kept time to her voice's musick."

"Trulie a place for pleasantnesse, not unfit to flatter solitarinesse, for it (a lodge) being set upon such an unsensible rising of the ground, as you come to a pretie height before almost you perceive that you ascend, it gives the eye lordship over a good large circuit, which according to the nature of the countrie, being diversified betweene hilles and dales, woods and plaines, one place more cleare, another more darkesome, it seems a pleasant picture of nature with lonely lightsomnesse and artificiall shadowes."

"A Laund, each side whereof was so bordered both with high timber trees, and copses of farre more humble growth, that it might easilie bring a solitarie mind to

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looke for no other companions than the wild burgesses of the forest."

Another picture, and of an altogether different character, presented itself to our minds as we wandered in this Earthly Paradise. It may be described in few words: The battle of Zutphen, the 22nd of September, 1586 ("Was it a beautiful September day, as this is?" we asked ourselves); chief among the fight the gallant author of the *Arcadia;* one horse has been shot from under him, but as he mounts the second he perceives his friend, Lord Willoughby, in danger, and hurries to his rescue. His purpose achieved, he returns to a last vigorous charge upon the enemy, and is shot through the left thigh: consternation spreads among his friends. "O Philip," says the Lord Lieutenant, "I am sorry for thy hurt." "This have I done," is the reply, "to do you honour, and her Majesty service." Then comes Sir William Russel, and, with tears in his eyes, kisses Sidney's hand, and says: "O noble Sir Philip, there was never man attayned hurt more honourably than ye have done, or any served like unto you." Parched with thirst and faint through loss of blood, he craves for water as he is borne from the field of battle. It is immediately brought; but as it is raised to his lips, he sees near him a dying soldier, gasping for the least drop of moisture. "Give it him," whispers Sir Philip, as he pushes the draught aside untasted; "his necessity is far greater than mine."

And so, in company with these sober thoughts, we leave behind us the pleasaunce once so dear to the poet who dreamed here and sang in quiet and luxurious solitude, and then went out to meet a hero's death for the glory of England.*

* "Remembrance of that most heroick spirit,
The heaven's pride, the glory of our days,
Which now triumpheth through immortal merit

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As we walked homeward leisurely, with all the clear, bright afternoon before us, we stepped aside at Bemerton to sit awhile in the little church which holy George Herbert (another illustrious member of the House of Pembroke) has made consecrate for all times and seasons. From one of the little windows we could see, across the road, the quiet parsonage (the greater portion of which was rebuilt by Herbert), with its quaint exhortation cut in stone above the door :—

> "If thou chance for to find
> A new house to thy mind,
> And built without thy cost,
> Be good to the poor,
> As God gives thee store,
> And then my labour's not lost."

Sitting in the holy restfulness of the place, we filled our fancy with thoughts of the author of *The Temple* wandering about the parsonage-garden "in the long, bright summer evenings, when the valley was filled with the golden haze which heralded the approaching sunset, and the white-breasted swallows were skimming through the balmy air, and the trout were leaping in the glistening

---

> Of his brave virtues, crowned with lasting bays
> Of heavenly bliss and everlasting praise;
> Who first my muse did lift out of the flore
> To sing his sweet delights in lowly lays,
> Bids me, most noble Lady, to adore
> His goodly image, living evermore
> In the Divine resemblance of your face,
> Which with your virtues ye embellish more,
> And native beauty deck with heavenly grace:
> For his and for your own especial sake
> Vouchsave from him this token in good worth to take."
> —*(Sonnet by Spenser, addressed to the Countess of Pembroke after Sidney's death.)*

LORD BROOKE said of Sidney: "Though I lived with him and knew him from a child, yet I never knew him other than a man with such steadiness of mind, lovely and familiar gravity, as carried grace and reverence above greater years. His talk was ever of knowledge, and his very play tended to enrich the mind.'

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Nadder, and nightingales were filling every brake with their delicious song." The glorious weather brought to our mind the little poem commencing,—

> "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
> The bridal of the earth and sky;
> The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;
> For thou must die;"

and, starting with such associations, we talked in a subdued tone of Izaak Walton, who had loved Herbert's memory so well; who had used the verses just mentioned in his *Complete Angler*, and who had written so tenderly, yet so justly, of its holy author. The Angler ought certainly, in the fitness of events, to have paid several visits to this charming out-of-the-world corner, where he would have been welcomed by Herbert, who in turn would assuredly have found much to love in the contemplative Izaak.

As at Wilton, so here in Bemerton, we sketched in words to each other, more by way of turning matters over to the thorough enjoyment of our hearts and minds than for any other reason, little pictures, in which the author we talked of formed the centre of interest.

Herbert was passionately fond of music, which was the recreation of his leisure hours, and an art, moreover, in which he appears to have excelled.* Walton refers

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* "Sweetest of sweets, I thank you: when displeasure
Did through my body wound my mind,
You took me thence; and in your house of pleasure
A dainty lodging me assigned.
Now I in you without a body move,
Rising and falling with your wings:
We both together sweetly live and love,
Yet say sometimes, God help poor kings.
Comfort, I'll die; for if you post from me,
Sure I shall do so and much more:
But if I travel in your company,
You know the way to heaven's door."
—*Church Music*—GEORGE HERBERT.

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to him as having composed "many divine hymns and anthems, which he set and sung to his lute or viol: and though he was a lover of retiredness, yet his love to music was such, that he usually went thrice every week, on certain appointed days, to the Cathedral Church in Salisbury, and at his return would say that his time spent in prayer and cathedral music elevated his soul, and was his heaven upon earth. But before his return thence to Bemerton, he would usually sing and play his part at an appointed private music-meeting; and to justify this practice he would often say: 'Religion does not banish mirth, but only moderates and sets rules to it.'"

We recollected that it was in one of these walks to Salisbury that "he saw a poor man with a poorer horse, that was fallen under his load: they were both in distress, and needed present help; which Mr. Herbert perceiving, put off his canonical coat, and helped the poor man to unload, and after to load, his horse. The poor man blessed him for it, and he blessed the poor man, and was so like the good Samaritan, that he gave him money to refresh both himself and his horse, and told him, 'that if he loved himself, he should be merciful to his beast.' Thus he left the poor man: and at his coming to his musical friends at Salisbury, they began to wonder that Mr. George Herbert, who used to be so trim and clean, came into that company so soiled and discomposed: but he told them the occasion. And when one of the company told him, 'He had disparaged himself by so dirty an employment,' his answer was, 'that the thought of what he had done *would prove music to him at midnight*, and that the omission of it would have upbraided him and made discord to his conscience whensoever he should pass by that place; for if I be bound to pray for all that be in distress, I am sure that I am bound, so far as it is in my power, to

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practice what I pray for. And though I do not wish for the like occasion every day, yet, let me tell you, I would not willingly let pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul, or showing mercy; and I praise God for this occasion. *And now let's tune our instruments.*'"

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THE POETRY OF GEORGE MEREDITH.

OF course we talked of poetry that evening at home; but not of Sir Philip Sidney's, nor yet of George Herbert's; for we had both been reading in sundry little volumes of late what had been done in this way by George Meredith, and to him and his verse we gave our souls and our talk. We were sorry (at least, we said so, with an inward chuckle of satisfaction; for, being lovers of rare books, both of us, we were comfortably and selfishly proud of *our* 1851 volumes of our author's poems) that Mr. Meredith had not seen fit to reprint his earliest verse, so that all who read his novels might make the full study of his entire productions, which at present is almost impossible, on account of the scarcity of this first book. And how ardently his admirers cherish copies of his verse-volumes! A writer in the *Athenæum* for July 25, 1885, positively revels in the possession of "the very scarce little collection published in 1851, by J. W. Parker and Sons;" and Grant Allen, in a comparatively recent number of the *American Magazine*, in a list of prizes of this kind, numbers the *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, "with my wife's name inscribed on the fly-leaf by the very hand of our dear neighbour at Box Hill, George Meredith." And

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why not confess it? Wilson, although he also has a copy of the 1851 volume, as well as of that of 1862, envies, in a thoroughly straightforward manner, my ownership of *Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside; with Poems and Ballads;* for it is a corrected copy, done by the "very hand" of the author, as Grant Allen would say; and, furthermore, it bears upon the title-page the autograph inscription, "T. A. Trollope, from the author." And so our talk began:—

WILSON.—It always appears to me that the carefully chosen library of a lover of books is one of the severest rebukes that can be offered to the constantly-increasing demand for something new which characterises these eager, busy days of ours, so full of the whirl and anxious excitement of life. On the shelves of the man who merely orders in books by the square foot, to drag the idea of refinement into his costly habitation, we find the most frightful jumble of time-serving authors occupying their positions with much seeming right. But what pleasure it is to turn from these to a genuine book-lover's collection, where Emerson and our own loved Tennyson (men, by the way, who early forsook the paths of gold-getting contact with the world, and chose rather to stand aside and dream of God and lofty ideals) are not roughly shouldered by rude upstarts without souls!

THE BOOKWORM.—'Tis this very plethora of things calling themselves books which makes the intelligent critic (otherwise book-taster) such an important factor in the world of to-day. And his duty, which is arduous, is also two-fold—to exercise justice towards, and to stand with manly integrity in the sight of, the author, and to deal candidly with the reading public; to be, in short, a truthful guide at the cross-roads we find everywhere in literature, able to lay aside any individual likings for particular paths, and willing, honestly, to say as need calls for it: "Up that lane lives a singer with a sweet

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and clear voice; his singing delights the ear, but his song is empty and worthless;" or, "Along that road you will surely meet the chanting philosopher. His song is terse as a picked line from the Hebrew *Proverbs*, and full of wisdom as a page of Plato; but his singing, as such, is poor stuff at best." A critic should know of a certainty what constitutes "jingle" before he commits his opinion; and, on the other hand, his ear should naturally be so fine, and artificially so cultivated, that strange bursts of music should be termed music, and not an exhibition of the want of it. If he be incapable of catching with equal sureness the majestic organ-tones of thunder and the divine sweetness and subtle melody of the still, small voice, he had better go to the carpenter's bench until he finds his mission——poetic criticism is not the work the gods have cut out for him. Why add to the fooleries which, as things are, beset authors and readers alike at every corner of life? For the world's sake we should let existence shake itself down into something like order, instead of sticking another disturbing finger in the already much be-muddled pie!

What I say has especial reference to these volumes of Meredith's which lie on the table.* To be smart, one ought, of course, to search high and low through them for signs of weakness, or plagiarism, or want of melody; and then, in doleful language and with extended syllables, lament the absence of all poetic thought, or sentiment, or idiom.

In our chat this evening let us be thankful at the very commencement that our attitude is not in this direction; that we do not wish to be smart. And why, after all,

* *Poems* (John W. Parker and Son, 1851). *Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside; with Poems and Ballads* (Chapman and Hall, 1862). *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (Macmillan and Co., 1883). *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life* (Macmillan and Co., 1887.)

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should anyone twist his scrap of conscience into any fantastic shape for the mere sake of being considered so very superior?

> "O sir, the truth, the truth! is't in the skies,
> Or in the grass, or in this heart of ours?
> But O, the truth, the truth!"

WILSON.—Has it ever struck you how plainly these little volumes tell, in their sequence, the story of the poet's inner life? The *first* (Meredith was only 23 years of age when he published it), in spite of its maturity of expression, is clearly the work of a young man looking at Nature half coyly, and with just a tinge of uncertainty about his position regarding her, and as part of her. And this looking of his into Nature is chaste and loving, and deeply imaginative and sympathetic. The *second* is a full trumpet-blast from a thoroughly awakened soul, securely conscious of its strength. The man has arrived at ripeness of power, and rejoices alike in body and soul, matter and mind; which, after all, in a study of life, are equally important parts of a mysterious whole, sacredly demanding uniform care and attention.

> "These things are life:
> And life, they say, is worthy of the Muse."

THE BOOKWORM.—Meredith's life is so full that his occasional bursts are almost fierce in their individuality. You recollect his—

> "I am not of those miserable males
> Who sniff at vice, and, daring not to snap,
> Do therefore hope for Heaven. I take the hap
> Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails
> Propels; but I am helmsman. Am I wreck'd,
> I know the devil has sufficient weight
> To bear: I lay it not on him, or fate.

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Besides, he's damned. That man I do suspect
A coward, who would burden the poor deuce
With what ensues from his own slipperiness."

We must not forget, however, that the series of poems in which these lines are found is duly endorsed :—

"This is not meat
For little people or for fools."

WILSON.—Then, his *third* and *fourth* volumes are serial to the others, inasmuch as they brim over with a mellow philosophy of ripeness, which is as autumn following in the wake of young spring and well-filled summer.

THE BOOKWORM.—It is this dove-tailing of his poetry which makes Meredith's volumes such a remarkable library in themselves for poets and lovers of nature—human and otherwise. Beginning with the early "Pastorals," and ending with the '87 volume, they contain the record of nearly forty years' faithful love of God's fair universe. That this love of his, born of sweet sympathy, is the true secret of the poet's power, Mr. Meredith has himself shown us :—

"For every elemental power
Is kindred to our hearts, and once
Acknowledged, wedded, once embraced,
Once taken to the unfettered sense,
Once claspt into the naked life,
The union is eternal."

And as a result of this acknowledging, wedding, embracing nature on the part of the poet, we have truthful delineations of vivid apprehensions of her various moods in each of our author's volumes. Witness, for instance, the powerful description of the rise and rush of the "South-West Wind in the Woodland," in his early

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Poems! This same intimate and loving acquaintance with Nature is particularly manifest in the "Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn," in *Modern Love*, where—

"The crimson-footed nymph is panting up the glade,
With the wine-jar at her arm-pit, and the drunken ivy braid
Round her forehead, breasts, and thighs: starts a satyr, and they speed:
Hear the crushing of the leaves: hear the cracking of the bough!
And the whistling of the bramble, the piping of the weed!"

WILSON.—And there is that favourite passage of mine, in "The Day of the Daughter of Hades" (taking up *Poems and Lyrics*, and reading):—

"The island was hers, and the deep,
All heaven, a golden hour.
Then with wonderful voice, that rang
Through air as the swan's nigh death,
Of the glory of Light she sang,
She sang of the rapture of Breath.
Nor ever, says he who heard,
Heard Earth in her boundaries broad,
From bosom of singer or bird
A sweetness thus rich of the God
Whose harmonies always are sane.
She sang of furrow and seed,
The burial, birth of the grain,
The growth, and the showers that feed,
And the green blades waxing mature
For the husbandman's armful brown.
O, the song in its burden ran pure,
And burden to song was a crown.
Callistes, a singer, skilled
In the gift he could measure and praise,
By a rival's art was thrilled,
Though she sang but a Song of Days,

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Where the husbandman's toil and strife
  Little varies to strife and toil:
But the milky kernel of life,
  With her numbered: corn, wine, fruit, oil!
The song did give him to eat:
  Gave the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh, young sense of Sweet:
  The grace of the battle for food,
With the issue Earth cannot refuse
  When men to their labour are sworn.
'Twas a song of the God of the Muse
        To the forehead of Morn."

THE BOOKWORM.—Such revelations of Nature's secrets prove Mr. Meredith to be too great a poet to suffer his love to be manifest in any mere catalogue of the external characteristics of his "Bacchante Mother." Her hidden life and inmost mysteries are what he finds and sings of:—

"Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,
  The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

. . . . . .

So passed he luminous-eyed, for earth and the fates
  We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears were charged
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,
  With music wrought of distraction his heart enlarged,
Celestial-shining, though mortal; singer, though mute,
  He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-root
  A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled."

The great mission of the poetic faculty is to discover this life; where it is evident, to rejoice in it; where it is hidden, to reveal; and where it is absent, to create, by breathing life into dead bones: in short, to make all it touches live and move and have being. Any fool can look at Nature as she appears to be, and, in some sort of fashion, describe what he sees; it requires a poet to

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make her life apparent in words that dance to her piping, and grieve to the tale of her darkness and sorrow.

WILSON.—But you certainly do not mean to say that there is no stubbornly faithful description in Meredith's verse.

THE BOOKWORM.—There is abundance of it, but never separate from the artistic suggestiveness that just leads the imagination on to do its work; and there is no subtler poetic power than this. And in harmony with it are our author's simple creed and hope:—

> "Faith in ourselves is faith in Time!
> And faith in Nature keeps the force
> We have in us for daily wear."

> "Then are there fresher mornings mounting East
> Than ever yet have dawned." *

WILSON.—Another specially notable gift of Meredith's is a conciseness of expression which in his case is certainly the concomitant of clearness of vision. The value and beauty of the power of manipulating words are to be seen in their fulness (apart from any theological bearing) in the simple sentence once penned as an essay on the miracle at the marriage at Cana: "The water saw its Maker, and blushed." No wonder crotchety old Doctor Johnson, when he once opened a paraphrase of the Gospels, and found the shortest verse in the Bible elaborated into the sentence: "The Saviour of mankind melted into a flood of tears," cried out: "Puppy," and flung the book into the fire. It is this elaboration usurping the place of true simplicity which makes us impatient sometimes even with Milton, especially in his detailing as a mechanical process the creation of the world as opposed

* "'Tis always morning somewhere in the world."
—RICHARD HENGIST HORNE.

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to the plainness of the account in Genesis. In Mr. Meredith's volume, *Poems and Lyrics*, his terseness is particularly noticeable, and, in some respects, is almost Emersonian. Examples offer themselves on page after page (taking up the book and reading). Here is one :—

> "For he said : A glad vision art thou !
> And she answered him : Thou to me !
> As men utter a vow."

And again :—

> "She prompts him to rejoice,
> Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud."

And :—

> "The thing that shudders most
> Within him is the burden of his cry."

THE BOOKWORM.—Then there are those two passages we were referring to yesterday.

WILSON.—Yes, here they are :—

> "Frailer than flower when the round
> Of the sickle encircles it : strong
> To tell of the things profound,
> Our inmost uttering song,
> Unspoken."

> "And the silence about her smile
> Said more than of tongue is revealed."

THE BOOKWORM.—Despite the brilliant series of novels Mr. Meredith has given us, I must confess that it is always a matter of regret to me that he has favoured the reading world with so little of his verse. His fastidiousness about what the world should have of his work of this kind almost equals that of Matthew Arnold

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(whose first volume of poems, by the way, was published two years previous to that of Meredith).

WILSON.—It would prove interesting to many of his admirers to know how far the influence of his father-in-law, Thomas Love Peacock, is answerable for the transfer of his powers from poetry to novel writing. This influence seems to have been extensive, for the careers of both men are somewhat analagous. Peacock and Meredith both apparently started with the idea that poetry was to be their principal form of expression, and both afterwards transferred their attention to prose as a fitter medium for their life-work.

THE BOOKWORM.—What makes one all the more regret that poetry has been to Meredith but the occasional flowering of his genius is the fact that his first published productions of this sort were full of a promise that made lovers of poetry expect great things from his muse. In 1851 Tennyson had published only his collected *Poems*, *The Princess*, and *In Memoriam*, and Wordsworth had been dead a twelvemonth; surely there was a poetic position for Mr. Meredith had he stretched forth determined hands to take it. But the very peculiarities of temperament which constitute a man a poet seem, in most cases, antagonistic to any such "stretching forth determined hands"; and so we must cease our regrets. Now, some nine-and-thirty years after its publication, upon carefully critical examination of the 1851 issue, and minute comparison of its many excellencies with those found in first volumes of poets who at present occupy positions in the foremost rank, one is bound to state that it contains poems which any living author might well be proud to own. It is folly either to affirm or deny that here and there throughout its pages are to be discovered echoes of Keats and Wordsworth. Was ever a first book of poetry free of lines that could unmistakably be traced back to the influence of somebody or

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something? Who is really original and self-poised in everything he does or utters? But Meredith's echoes are not mere echoes; they are instinct with a life which comes of his own rich individuality.

WILSON.—I scarcely follow you.

THE BOOKWORM.—To make my meaning clear, take for example the dainty little poem, "Violets." Here it is, in the first volume:—

"Violets, shy violets!
How many hearts with ye compare?
Who hide themselves in thickest green,
And thence unseen
Ravish the enraptured air
With sweetness, dewy fresh and rare!

"Violets, shy violets!
Human hearts to me shall be
Viewless violets in the grass,
And, as I pass,
Odours and sweet imagery
Will wait on mine and gladden me!"

Further on are a few lines to Spring:—

"When buds of palm do burst, and spread
Their downy feathers in the lane,
And orchard blossoms, white and red,
Breathe Spring delight and Autumn gain;
And the skylark shakes his wings in the rain;

"O, then is the season to look for a bride!
Choose her warily; woo her unseen;
For the choicest maids are those that hide
Like dewy violets under the green."

A certain class of critics would undoubtedly term this first poem an imitation of Herrick's verse, and the second a further imitation; yet upon candid and careful examination it will be evident that "Violets" is a true flower of its author's genius, having, it need not be denied, the

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grace about it which we find in some of Herrick's delicious trifles; but its individuality is certainly that of George Meredith, and of no other author. And the same might be said of the lines to Spring.

WILSON.—My attention was first drawn to Meredith's poetry by his charming appreciation of the distinctive qualities of the work of our greatest poets, which is so evident in these unrhymed quatrains. Let me read just three; I never seem to tire of them:—

"THE POETRY OF SPENSER.

"Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;
Vales where sweet life is all summer with golden romance;
Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and knights."

"THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE.

"Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean:
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like above it;
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates warm'd by one great human heart."

"THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH.

"A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the sky,
The voice of great Nature! sublime with her lofty conceptions,
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green, lowly vale."

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THE BOOKWORM.—That this little volume we have been quoting from should have been comparatively, if not altogether, ignored by some of our sapient writers, who have undertaken, with almost mechanical exactitude, the division of our modern poets into distinctive groups, tracing at the same time their subtly interwoven influence one on the other, is to me but another proof of the narrowness of outlook and superficiality of reading of third-class critics. I do not forget the scarcity of the book in making this statement; but a sight of it, if no more, is always to be gotten by one who wishes to use it to purpose. It has been gravely asserted (I forget for the moment by whom) that Rossetti's "Jenny" * bears signs of having been suggested by some of Buchanan's *London Poems*. I am willing to go a step beyond this, and affirm that some of the *London Poems* bear equal evidence of having been suggested by "London by Lamplight," which Mr. Meredith gave to the world fifteen years previous to the publication of Buchanan's volume. This, however, is at best but a fruitless topic; of far more value is the fact that in "London by Lamplight" Meredith joins issue with all great and earnest souls in recognising the twin responsibility which attaches itself to our great social evil. How definite is the blast he blows:—

"I will not hide the tragic sight—
Those drown'd black locks, those dead lips white,
Will rise from out the slimy flood,
And cry before God's throne for blood!

"Those stiffened limbs, that swollen face—
Pollution's last and best embrace—
Will call, as such a picture can,
For retribution upon man."

* One of his earliest conceptions.

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This is realism with a vengeance—realism which, nevertheless, has manliness enough in it to drive, if needs be, even the poetry out of the verse, so that Truth might breathe.

WILSON.—By way of contrast to your two stanzas, let me read you the concluding lines of his "Death of Winter":—

> "O, Winter, I'd live that life of thine!
> With a frosty brow and an icicle tongue,
> And never a song my whole life long,
> Were such delicious burial mine!
> To die and be buried, and so remain
> A wandering brook in April's train,
> Fixing my dying eyes for aye
> On the dawning brows of the maiden May."

THE BOOKWORM.—The publication of *Poems and Lyrics* was a revelation to me of a side of Meredith's genius which I hardly expected to find. I had been struck with the charm and splendidly melodious rhythm of his "Love in the Valley," which I had read and re-read in his first volume; but when I came to examine the *Poems and Lyrics*, I found that the eleven stanzas of the poem had been happily extended to some twenty-six. Its early beauty, as I have just said, was noteworthy; but its added sweetness, and subsequent improvement of construction, showed me that its author possessed the rare faculty of being able artistically to criticise his own work, and, at the same time, to supply without stint what its deficiencies called for.

WILSON.—I agree with you in terming this a rare gift. Just look, for instance, at how Bailey has revised his *Festus*, and with such questionable success. How often the cry of literary workers has been: "Could I but *see*, I would *do*."

THE BOOKWORM.—A further development of this per-

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sonal criticism and reparation is the power especially noticeable in the last two volumes of Meredith's poetry —the power of rejecting needless accessories, so that the ultimate result might stand out in all its rounded fulness. The possession of this power is the distinguishing mark of the artist, and its absence reveals the amateur. No profoundness of single thoughts, or brilliancy of separate sentiments, will ever compensate for the want of completeness and rounded perfection in a poem, any more than, in building, prettiness and finikin carving of detached stones can take the place of the strength which must characterise a mass of masonry as a structural whole. Certainly, for the sake of harmony, due attention should be paid to detail: it should, however, be laid down as a broad and general principle, that "construction must be decorated, not decoration constructed." In the *Poems and Lyrics* especially, every line is necessary; and, although here and there we come across a quotable passage, it is not to be wrested from the context with any show of success, or without losing some of the power and brilliancy which distinguish it in its rightful position.

WILSON.—But don't let us forget the 1862 volume! In talking as we are, we are apt to skip about, most unaccountably, from the first production to the last, throwing in, by way of change, a little of one of the middle ones, thus making a thorough round-about of the lot. *Modern Love* is valuable to me principally as indicating a marked advance over Meredith's previous publication in many of the qualities by which poetic composition is raised to the dignity of art. The poet has been a student in the meanwhile, and the result is seen particularly in the epigrammatic versification of the love-poems, which form the remarkable feature of the book. Although the author lays a curb upon his powers, and holds them in admirable control, there is, with it all, no death and burial of poetic insight. In too many

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instances, alas! the divine faculty is smothered beneath the weight of a self-imposed education in the technicalities of the poet's craft. I do not think it is so in the case of Mr. Meredith; the beauty and value of increased knowledge are to be seen by every careful student of his work. Turn, for instance, to this "Autumn Even-Song":—

"The long cloud, edged with streaming gray,
    Soars from the West;
The red leaf mounts with it away,
    Showing the nest
A blot among the branches bare:
There is a cry of outcasts on the air.

"Swift little breezes, darting chill,
    Pant down the lake;
A crow flies from the yellow hill,
    And in its wake
A baffled line of labouring rooks:
Steel-surfaced to the light the river looks.

"Pale on the panes of the old hall
    Gleams the lone space
Between the sunset and the squall;
    And on its face
Mournfully glimmers to the last:
Great oaks grow mighty minstrels in the blast.

"Pale the rain-rutted roadways shine
    In the green light
Behind the cedar and the pine:
    Come, thundering night!
Blacken broad earth with hoards of storm:
For me yon valley-cottage beckons warm."

But to recur to the notable feature of the volume. I certainly know of no other living poet who could treat the subjects over which the Love Poems extend in the mysterious and well-clothed manner of Mr. Meredith.

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His language hides in a surprising fashion from the vulgar ken of the crowd what it coyly reveals to the few who have attained to sufficient culture and world-experience to benefit by it. For these latter his sweep of the strings of Humanity is that of a master-hand.

THE BOOKWORM.—A hand, by the way, which shows the owner to possess a rare appreciation of dramatic situation, which he knows how to use to advantage, as well as a healthy fund of satire, well seasoned and admirably trained to its place and purpose. It cannot be denied, however, that the subjects of his choice are not always the pleasantest to dwell upon. Take, for instance, the one treated in the poem numbered XVII. in the *Modern Love* series:—

"At dinner she is hostess, I am host.
  Went the feast ever cheerfuller? She keeps
  The topic over intellectual deeps
In buoyancy afloat. They see no ghost.
With sparkling surface-eyes we ply the ball:
  It is in truth a most contagious game;
  Hiding the Skeleton shall be its name.
Such play as this the devils might appal!
But here's the greater wonder, in that we,
  Enamour'd of our acting and our wits,
  Admire each other like true hypocrites.
Warm-lighted glances, Love's Ephemeræ,
Shoot gaily o'er the dishes and the wine.
  We waken envy of our happy lot.
  Fast, sweet, and golden shows our marriage-knot.
Dear guests, you now have seen Love's corpse-light shine!"

Again, on one page, Meredith sings of some rustic revellers:—

"They must, I think, be wiser than I am:
They have the secret of the bull and lamb.
'Tis true that when we trace its source, 'tis beer.'

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And on another he discourses in the manner of a veritable gray-beard :—

> "If any state be enviable on earth,
> 'Tis your born idiot's, who, as days go by,
> Still rubs his hands before him like a fly,
> In a queer sort of meditative mirth."

WILSON.—But this pessimism is not habitual to Mr. Meredith; and his studies are not always of human beings, whose

> "Sense is with their senses all mix'd in."

He himself sings of man's outward vision being dependent on man's inward condition :—

> "True harmony within can apprehend
> Dumb harmony without."

His song may sometimes be heavily burdened, as in the following :—

> "Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
> When hot for certainties in this our life!
> In tragic hints here see what evermore
> Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
> Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
> To throw that faint, thin line upon the shore!"

But it generally has a set-off of another, and totally different, character—the frowning cloud with its silver lining. What matters the "dusty answer" the soul gets, when exquisitely idyllic life still exists "somewhere in the world"?—

> "We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
> And in the osier-isle we heard their noise.
> We had not to look back on summer joys,

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Or forward to a summer of bright dye.
  But in the largeness of the evening earth
  Our spirits grew as we went side by side."

THE BOOKWORM.—Then there is "Juggling Jerry," with its touches of genuine pathos, which I consider, in some respects, one of its author's most notable poems. There is a sense of the freedom of fresh air about it which, despite its central idea of death, makes one positively revel in the glory of out-door existence:—

"Yonder come smells of the gorse, so nutty,
  Gold-like and warm: it's the prime of May.
Better than mortar, brick, and putty
  Is God's house on a blowing day.
Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it:
  All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?
There's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,
  But He's by us, juggling the change.

"I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying
  Once—it's long gone—when two gulls we beheld,
Which, as the moon got up, were flying
  Down a big wave that spark'd and swell'd.
Crack went a gun: one fell: the second
  Wheel'd round him twice, and was off for new luck:
There in the dark her white wing beckoned:—
  Drop me a kiss—I'm the bird dead struck!"

WILSON.—The mere fact of having anything whatever to say about this 1862 volume of Mr. Meredith's opens up again the interesting speculation as to the extent of the influence exercised on each other by the notable men who gathered round Rossetti and his art. As evidence of the beautiful sympathy existing between minds thus drawn together, it is only necessary to refer to the apparently trifling similarity of form taken by the poetry of this brotherhood. Although Rossetti's "Sister Helen," with its conspicuous refrain, was only given to the world

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in its present completeness at a comparatively late date, it was originally produced as early as 1851 or 1852; and we know now that the poetry which Rossetti so hesitatingly published was known to, and admired by, his friends during the many years it lay in manuscript. No doubt the form, as well as the idiom, of similarly remarkable productions, formed the subject-matter of much criticism in the familiar chats carried on in Rossetti's rooms. Whatever trifles of condemnation might have been floated regarding the subject-matter, one thing is certain: admiration and emulation ran high. The ballad-form, in its variety and beauty, was considered worthy of revival. The Gothic spirit caught eagerly at the music of such refrains as—

> "And blow the winds, I-ho!
> Sing, blow the winds, I-ho!
> Clear away the morning dew,
> And blow the winds, I-ho!"

and—

> "Hey Lillie, ho Lillie lallie."

These, however, were not chosen for close imitation; an essentially modern (altogether different to the Puritanic) spirit of seriousness replaced their wild, breezy sentiment, so that the burden became the true tragic note of truly tragic poems.

The first, perhaps, after Tennyson with his "Sisters" to take full advantage of the revival of the ballad-form, was Meredith, in "Margaret's Bridal-Eve," in his 1862 volume. Four years later Swinburne followed, with his *Poems and Ballads;* then came the publication of Rossetti's poetry, some of which had had existence for years in manuscript, and William Bell Scott's *Poems* many of which had also been written long before their final publication. All these authors, without naming

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others less known, proved clearly the wealth of peculiar power which lay in the old ballad-form.

THE BOOKWORM.—Just another word before you leave, Wilson;—we must refer to Meredith's later poetry at length some other time. One of us said just now that his more modern work of this kind contained a "mellow philosophy of ripeness." It is also characterised by originality, both of conception and elaboration; in it thought and expression are happily wedded. The verse-clothing is natural, inasmuch as it is the legitimate outcome of the thought. True, the idiom stands aloof from that of ordinary writers, with a terseness and dignity peculiarly its own; but not more so than does the matter. The serene earnestness of the author's sweep of vision over and into Nature is so unique, that it certainly has a right to make utterance as it sees fit, even though that utterance requires careful attention for its unravelment by the casual reader. The virility of Mr. Meredith has need of the epigrammatic language of *Poems and Lyrics* and *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life*, in order to find adequate expression. I, for one, certainly cannot conceive of the subject-matter of these volumes existing in its completeness in any form other than that which it has taken.

WILSON.—But the morning is getting in upon us and our talk much too rapidly. Good-night.

THE BOOKWORM.—Good-night; good-night.

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FIELDING AND "TOM JONES"—POE AND "THE RAVEN."

RETURNING one evening from a walk to the King's Manor, in Clarendon Park, where all kinds of famous events occurred in the old historic days, Wilson and I fell talking of the position mendacious imagination occupies in literature. As we passed along the quiet road, meeting only an occasional rustic returning home after his day's labour in the fields, we could not but contrast the tranquil beauty of the place and hour with the kind of life we had lately been leading in the heart of a busy town. It was sufficient for us that the birds were glad in their singing, and that the stream glided along, without hurry, through the quiet meadows with their fringe of willows, upon which the down-going sun loitered with many a caress. And then, Wilson's voice, though definite enough when laden with oracular utterance, is usually in nowise out of harmony with the peace which lingers about hawthorn-hedges in the sweet summer eventide.

And this is how the tale of his wisdom ran just then:—

WILSON.—Call it what you like—mendacious imagination, literary lying, or illegitimate fancifulness—the fact remains that naked falsehood struts about in a most

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impudent manner in our literature; but I do not deny that it some cases it is all the more attractive for being divorced from staid and soberly-clothed truthfulness. Of course, a creative mind, dealing with purely fictitious matter, has no cause for stooping to literalness in any shape; but when a man lays himself out to tell of what has actually occurred, he should call the proverbial spade a spade. He may, perchance, be permitted to use an adjective for the nonce, and thus draw a little diluted poetry into the affair, for, after all, a "square spade," or a "round shovel," is a trifle more attractive than the bare "spade."

THE BOOKWORM.—What old fossil are you unearthing now? Whither tend your remarks? for I notice there is generally something tolerably concrete at the end of your apparent disconnectedness. In the dim distance you generally see an object to be "made for."

WILSON.—Well, I certainly am not going to unearth the bones of Chatterton or Shakespeare-Ireland; let any antiquated scraper of literary forgeries take it in hand; the business doesn't tempt me.

THE BOOKWORM.—Why call him Shakespeare-Ireland?

WILSON.—To distinguish properly the Shakespeare-forgery-Ireland from the Book-Lover's-Enchiridion-Ireland. One name is only spat upon, whilst the other has a warm corner assigned to it in every bookish man's heart.

THE BOOKWORM.—Oh! ah! certainly. Something after the manner of the Saturday Reviewer, when he (or she) discerns between Mr. Morris of Penbryn and Mr. Morris of Parnassus.

WILSON.—What?

THE BOOKWORM.—I didn't intend to tread on your corns. But to change the subject. What a nice, comfortable old place Fielding must have had when he lived in yonder house, and wrote *Tom Jones!*

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We had just arrived at the foot of Milford Hill; and Fielding's old house, in which he wrote the greater portion of *Tom Jones*, stood out picturesquely, with its red brick walls and tiled roof, against the tender grayish-blue of the evening sky, flanked on one side of the road by the tall poplars, which keep perpetual watch over the quaint little stithy where Fielding probably lounged away many an odd hour in observant chat with the country people, whose portraits he drew with such a master-hand in his novels. The picture it all made, just now, answered the purpose—it came just in the nick of time; not a minute too soon—for it drove from Wilson's mind the offensive distinction of the *Saturday Review*, which really had no excuse to offer for its intrusion into our talk.

WILSON.—Fielding didn't write *Tom Jones* here in Sarum.

THE BOOKWORM.—I think so.

WILSON.—Nay, friend; I speak on the authority of several writers, Cunningham among the number, who assert that *Tom Jones* was written in Bow Street.

THE BOOKWORM.—And I speak not only from other authorities, who differ from Cunningham and his followers in the matter, but from common-sense, which gives me this version:—Fielding went up to London to enter upon his duties as police magistrate in December, 1748; the work to which we refer was published in February, 1749; consequently, it could not well have been penned in Bow Street. The finishing touches might have been added in London, but the book was written, without doubt, in the quiet old place yonder, some time before its author's departure from the neighbourhood.

WILSON.—Let it be so, then. But what was started as a change of topic has brought us, indirectly, back to our original subject-matter. For myself, I know of no

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more interesting gossip than that in which an author tells of the moods in which his books were written, and the mechanical manner in which he drew his material together for the benefit of his readers. I wonder what portion of *Tom Jones* had birth first! Was the book written in the form we now find it, with its little moral essays interwoven with the fiction, or were the preaching parts an after-growth? Perhaps it was even written backwards, and the Bow Street portions (if there be any such) are standing boldly in front of the Salisbury weavings. But who can tell?

THE BOOKWORM.—You say you are not going to unearth the bones of Chatterton or Ireland; what literary fraud, then, have you in hand? Here we are at our cottage door; come along, and let us have it out inside.

WILSON (shaking himself down into the comfortable arm-chair in the study, near which no one dares get when he is about).—I have in my mind the matter of Edgar Allan Poe, and that *Raven* poem of his.

THE BOOKWORM.—But here, get some foundation of understanding of the man and his nature before you start. It is a curious coincidence, but this very morning I chanced to dip into an essay of A. H. K. B.'s, and this is what I found with reference to Poe (taking a volume from the table and reading): "From the very beginning of his career there seems to have been some insane infatuation upon him; he was the very ideal of a black sheep; he was bad and wretched throughout. Through his whole life there never was a time when, for more than two or three weeks, he promised to become anything better. His sky never brightened. We feel that it would have been his salvation to have been put under some external control; he was not fit to be his own master." Have you charity enough, Wilson, boldly to ask the question regarding Poe: Who sinned, this man (in some state of pre-existence) or his parents (in their

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carelessness of the fact that their sins would be visited on their children to the third and fourth generations, through the transmitted poison of unchecked appetites and habits), that he should have been born morally maimed?

WILSON.—Candidly, I haven't the desire to ask the question. My interest at present is taken up with the man as a man, and with his poem as a poem, despite your bit of special pleading in thin disguise. But without theorising on the matter in the least, I can cheerfully pardon this unballasted genius for many a wild prank of his.

THE BOOKWORM (commencing to puff clouds of smoke from his pipe).—Go ahead, then, and have your say just in your own manner; I'm happy.

WILSON.—The story surrounding *The Raven* is certainly to be classed among literary curiosities. Simply told it is but this:—The poem appeared first in the *American Review* for February, 1845, over the *nom de guerre* of "Quarles," and at once got talked about. Many were the speculations as to its authorship, until one evening, being at the house of a friend, Poe was asked by the hostess to give the assembled friends a recitation or reading. The piece he recited was *The Raven*, and thenceforward no doubt existed as to its writer. Then came the busy voices of the critics. One spoke of its composition during a prolonged but fierce burst of inspiration; another asserted that it was all the result of sober reasoning and poetic mechanism—of inspiration there was none in it.* And so the author, seeing the field fairly open to him, wrote *The Philosophy of Composition*,

* A certain writer on the subject even went so far as to declare that Poe deliberately sought the death of his wife, by his neglect and unkindness, that he might embalm her memory in immortal dirges.

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a prose declaration to form pendant and companion to his accomplished feat in verse. And a wonderful production it is, forsooth! In its way it appears to me as marvellous an outburst as *The Raven* itself. Where is your volume of Poe's prose?

THE BOOKWORM.—Third shelf on your left, second in brown calf.

WILSON.—Ah, here it is! I'm going to read part of the essay to you.

THE BOOKWORM.—Let us have only the portion of it which really bears upon your point; we all know the story by this time. Anyhow, go ahead, 'tis always more or less interesting.

WILSON (reading).—"Charles Dickens, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination of *Barnaby Rudge*, says: 'By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his *Caleb Williams* backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done.'" And so Poe goes on to the bottom of the second page, where he begins his own confession, apparently with truthfulness and in simplicity of heart. "For my own part," he says, "I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select *The Raven* as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion

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with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

. . . . . .

"The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression; for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed.

. . . . . .

"Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper length for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

"My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed. And here I may as well observe, that throughout the construction I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration —the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. . . . . When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect; they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul—not* of intellect or of heart. . . . .

"Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation, and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. . . . . In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the

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theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. . . . . As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone, both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought; that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of *the application* of the *refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried. . . . .

"These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. . . . . This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*. . . . . The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. . . . . That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt: and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o*, as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r*, as the most producible consonant.

"The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word 'Nevermore.' In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

"The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word 'Nevermore.' . . . . Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non*-reasoning creature capable of speech; and, very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a raven, as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.

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"I had now gone so far as the conception of a raven—the bird of ill omen—monotonously repeating the one word, 'Nevermore,' at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself—'Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?' 'Death,' was the obvious reply. 'And when,' I said, 'is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?' From what I have already explained at some length, the answer here, also, is obvious—'When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*.' The death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover. . . . .

"Here, then, the poem may be said to have its beginning—at the end, where all works of art should begin—for it was here, at this point of my preconsiderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:—

"'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil! prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name Lenore?'
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'" *

* We offer no apology for the length of the above quotation from Poe's essay, knowing well what a horrid nuisance it is to have to lay aside a volume we happen to be reading, to make reference to another lying on a shelf *somewhere* in the house. It spoils half the pleasure of devouring what is before us.

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And so Poe goes on with further weaving of the same patterned tapestry, telling a tale which certainly bears on its surface the impress of reality.

THE BOOKWORM.—But this version has been known as false for some time now. Poe, in fact, confessed to his most intimate friends that no writing of his was so fictitious as the published analysis of *The Raven.* The various confidences of the author on the subject were, however, at variance with each other; the only point upon which they actually agreed was that the account given to the world had no truth in it; was indeed naught but an imaginative fabrication.

WILSON.—But the matter doesn't end there. Poe appears to have had an accurate acquaintance with Oriental languages, which he turned to account by translating, almost literally, his *Raven* from the Persian. The translation is so minute and truthful, that even the cadences are preserved throughout, while the curious repetition of rhymes by which it is distinguished is equally characteristic of the work of the Persian poet.

THE BOOKWORM.—But does this statement rest on reliable authority? I have heard it put forth before, and I have also known it vigorously denied. Such a singular specimen of literary imposture, if it be such, deserves one's attention.

WILSON.—I believe the discovery is due to the well-known traveller in the East, Mr. Lang, formerly of the Bombay service, and it has since been corroborated by some of the most celebrated of our English Orientalists.

THE BOOKWORM.—As a man Poe has been given up long ago, but really, when one carefully considers his marvellous imaginative resource, he looms big among literary workers. It needed almost as distinctive a genius to fabricate *The Philosophy of Composition* as to produce such a wild snatch of melody as *The Raven.*

WILSON.—It just comes back to my original point.

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In some cases the naked falsehood which struts about in our literature in so impudent a manner proves all the more attractive for being divorced from staid and sober truth. If Lang's theory of the Eastern birth of *The Raven* is correct, Poe's genius as seen in the creation of *The Philosophy of Composition* is far more startling than it would otherwise appear. Robbed of his bay-leaves in the realm of poetry, Poe is crowned with a double wreath of berried holly for his prose.*

* It is hardly necessary to state here that the companions in this conversation were well acquainted with both sides of the story of Poe, and the Persian origin of *The Raven*.

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IN QUIET FIELDS OR BUSY STREETS? —GENIUS AND EXPRESSION—THE UNTOLD.

I ALWAYS like to see Wilson's face when he has a fit of enthusiasm on. If ever man's soul peeps from windows, his does then. And this is his healthy attitude; when he speaks critically, or only half-approvingly, it simply means that his intellect is sitting on his truer self. With radiant face he brought me, the other day, a charmingly got-up little volume of poems, with an unknown name attached to it, somewhat Huguenotish in appearance, and, to our practical northern ears, musical in pronunciation, predisposing one in favour of the writer's work. I found his enthusiasm not wanting in just cause in this instance, for, as I read, "I was conscious here and there of a delicacy that I hardly dared to breathe upon."

WILSON.—It's a thousand pities that the author of poems like these should be compelled to live in a busy, money-making town.

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THE BOOKWORM.—What would you have for him, then?

WILSON.—Something other than this, certainly; some kindlier fate, that would enable him to commune with Nature and his own soul in peace.

THE BOOKWORM.—My dear fellow, you are running away with yourself. A man's surroundings are what he makes of them.* It requires great strength of character to live in solitude—to live even the ideal life pictured by Petrarch.† A poet loses nothing by living in the dark, grey city, where he can hear and feel the throbbing heart of man.‡ And if solitude be needed, where can he find it so overwhelming and absolute as in a crowd?

WILSON.—But to many such would be distraction; the value of solitude lies not so much in the fact of its being solitude, as in its being the absence of busy-ness.

THE BOOKWORM.—Still I maintain that to many the coming and going of a crowd, intent on what is of no

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* "Men seek retreats, houses in the country, seashores and mountains. . . . . But this is altogether a mark of the most common sort of men; for it is in thy power, whenever thou shalt choose, to retire into thyself. For nowhere, either with more quiet or more freedom from trouble, does a man retire than into his own soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts that, by looking into them, he is immediately in perfect tranquility."—MARCUS AURELIUS.

"The great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."—EMERSON.

† "So happily am I situated, that I enjoy all the charms of rural seclusion, yet retain within my reach all the advantages of the town. If I grow weary of solitude, I sally forth and indulge in society; if I am disgusted or satiated with company, I return to the sweet repose, to the endearing and interesting occupations, of solitude."

‡ "The hopes, and fears, and regrets which move and trouble life keep it fresh and healthy, as the sea is kept alive by the trouble of its tides. . . . . As it is, there are agitations and sufferings in our lot enough; but we must remember that it is on account of these sufferings and agitations that we become creatures breathing thoughtful life."—ALEXANDER SMITH.

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interest to them, does not interfere with their habits of thought or contemplation. It may be an illustration not exactly to the point, but there is our mutual friend Fielden. When he is embarrassed in any way in his original drafts for his novels, he hies himself away to the cathedral, and gets into the thickest of the mass of worshippers, but sufficiently away from the conductors of the service to be troubled by no distinct word of it all. After an hour's unconsciousness to externals, which he says he can never get to the same degree elsewhere, he has generally mastered his difficulties of construction.

WILSON.—But you heard him confess the other night that if by any chance he becomes conscious of the nearness of anything repulsive—a silly or meaningless face, for instance—his absorption in his subject is effectually prevented, and he has to endure a most miserable time. I admit that artists always work best in their trances; but this trance state is not always at beck and call, and is not to be dealt out by the yard, as ribbon across a draper's counter; it comes and goes like a dream.

THE BOOKWORM.—Still, it can, to some extent, be helped forward when one has thought sufficiently of the matter, and studied his own peculiarities a little. To recur to Fielden. If in the day-time his muse befriends him not, he can, by drawing his blinds and shutting out the sunshine, work with tolerable success by the light of his lamp. When a man is forty years of age, he is either a fool or a philosopher in his methods of work. I admit it is rather a materialistic view of the inspiration without which no man ever accomplished anything artistically great; but still, there is ample room for the introduction of a little common sense into the subject.

WILSON.—But the same conditions affect men differently. "Look at the stars, if thou wilt be alone," says Emerson; "the beams which flow from this heavenly world separate thee from thy surroundings. One might

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think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man in the heavenly bodies the perpetual presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe, and adore, and preserve for many generations the memory of the city of God which had been shown!" And there is that poem of Matthew Arnold's, which, if it once gets to a man's heart, makes for itself an abiding place there:—

"Weary of myself, and sick of asking
  What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
  Forwards, forwards, o'er the star-lit sea.

"And a look of passionate desire
  O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
  Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

"'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'ye stars, ye waters,
  On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
  Feel my soul becoming vast like you!'

"From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
  Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
  'Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
  Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
  Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"'And with joy the stars perform their shining,
  And the sea its long, moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
  All the fever of some differing soul.

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"'Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.'

"O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:
'Resolve to be thyself; and know, that he
Who finds himself loses his misery!'"

But what is food of this kind to one man is deadly poison to another. The streets of London inspired Dickens, who would come up from the country to find in them the refreshment he needed; Lamb did not care if he never saw a mountain in his life—London was all he wanted; De Quincey, a Lakist in many things, loved streets with his whole soul; the partiality of L. E. L. for London was extraordinary; Walter Besant writes eloquently of "great London"; and we all remember the preference of Dr. Johnson in the same direction, to whom the streets of the metropolis were as dear as the banks of Doon to Burns, as the green woods and ways of Milly to Lamartine, as the sweet meads and streams of Penshurst to Philip Sydney, and as the lakes and hills of Westmoreland to Wordsworth. "Nay, was it not in London that *Juliet* dawned upon the fancy of sweet Shakespeare, and Fletcher courted his *Faithful Shepherdess*, and the soft *Hero* charmed the memory of poor Kit Marlowe. Surely the Muse doth appear to her children, albeit under a cloud, even in the busiest streets. The stranger seeth her not; but they know, by the ambrosial beauty of the air, that a celestial visitant hath alighted in the midst of them. And beside this, doth not a poetic heart carry all the delights of the seasons with it? So Shakespeare saw the moonlight sleeping on the bank, while walking, perchance, along the Blackfriars; and the

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nightingale sprang up beneath his feet in the stir of Cheapside." *

And poets, you know, are not mere compilers of catalogues of the beauties of Mother Nature; her spirit and her life are theirs. They dwell awhile with her, sufficiently long to feel the imprint of her kiss upon their brows, and then retire to the sweet fairy-land made of their own interpretation of what it all was and is. And out of the fulness of their satisfied memories, breathed upon by imagination, they give her forth to their friends. Inanimate Nature as she really is, and as she is made to be in the poet's dream, are altogether different things. Think you that one in a thousand of the readers of George Meredith's verse ever feels the nearness to the subject of his song and rapture that he does? I dare swear not. His "Joy of Earth" is peculiarly that of his own mental characteristics. The most perfect beauty in which Nature ever clothed herself is as nothing to that which attends her as she peeps forth from memories suffused by the glory of imagination. † 'Tis not the songs

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* "How best doth vision come
To the poet's mind?

. . . . . .

"Shall he attune his voice
To sweetest song,
When earth and sea and sky alike rejoice,
And men are blest, and think no thought of wrong,
In some ideal heaven, some happy isle,
Where life is stiffened to a changeless smile?

. . . . . .

"Rather amid the throng
Of toiling men
He finds the food and sustenance of song
Spread by hidden hands, again, and yet again,
Where'er he goes, by crowded city street,
He fares thro' springing fancies, sad and sweet."
—LEWIS MORRIS—*The Food of Song*.

† "*In years gone by*, I had only to look up from my desk, and see a noble loch in its inexhaustible loveliness, and a mountain in

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in childhood which affect us, but the songs *of* childhood heard in later years, when they have grown mellowed by memories.

THE BOOKWORM.—But in solitude, as well as in the busy haunts of men, poets are of kin. The reason of the unhappiness of many born with genius in the soul, but who cannot "out with it,"* is that they usually are too fond of their day-dreams to leave them for a while to bend themselves to the study of that most commonplace thing, a dictionary—the storehouse of the raw elements of possible epics and dramas, histories and lyrics. I like

its majesty. It was a daily and hourly delight to watch the breezes play about the enchanted isles, on the delicate silvery surface, dimming some clear reflection, or trailing it out in length, or cutting sharply across it with acres of rippling blue. It was a frequent pleasure to see the clouds play about the crest of Cruachan and Ben Vorick's golden head, grey mists that crept upwards from the valleys, till the sunshine suddenly caught them, and made them brighter than the snows they shaded. And the leagues and leagues of heather on the lower land to the southward, that became like the aniline dyes of deepest purple and blue, when the sky was grey in the evening—all save one orange streak! Ah, those were spectacles never to be forgotten, splendours of light and glory, and sadness of deepening gloom, when the eyes grew moist in the twilight, and secretly drank their tears."—P. G. HAMERTON—*The Intellectual Life.*

* "Othmar, unwitting of the guard's commentary, continued to gaze down the river, repeating in his thoughts the Greek of Bion's sonnet to Hesperus. He was wishing vaguely that he had the gift of poetical expression; he knew that he thought as poets think, but Nature had denied him the power of giving metrical utterance to them. He would sooner, he believed, on such moonlit nights as these, have been able to express what he felt, to portray what he fancied, than have had all the millions which fate had allotted to him. Even a second-rate poet can have such happiness in the fancies he plays with, and the figures in which he shapes them on the empty paper. Othmar, from his earliest boyhood, had been haunted with all these imaginings which make the heaven of those who can lose themselves in them, and find complete clothing of eloquence for them. But they remained mute within him; they were rather painful than consoling to him; when he recalled passages of Shelley, of Musset, of Heine, of Leopardi, it seemed to him that the tongue in which they spoke was so familiar to him, that it should have been his own, and yet he had forgotten it, or could not learn it; in some way could never make it his."—QUIDA'S *Othmar.*

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to think of the thorough knowledge shown of his subject by the "down-east" orator, who gave a friend his recipe for eloquence: "Get yourself chock-full of the subject, knock out the bung, and let Nature caper;" which, I suppose, is but a more emphatic mode of repeating Falstaff's injunction to ancient Pistol: "If thou hast any tidings, prithee deliver them like a man of this world." A man's thoughts "admit no bondage if his words have wings."

WILSON.—Now that you have touched upon this subject, has it ever occurred to you that to the attentive student of poetry nothing can possibly be more advantageous than to trace the steps by which the art of expression perfects itself?

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes, it has; and, paradoxical as it might appear, I have often noticed that it is both saddening and amusing to note the ultimate dethronement of expression as a mere art. It is an old story: cutting down, weeding out, polishing up, until at last a thing of emptiness and glitter is the result; and then Simplicity steps out, and laughs it in the face, and demands to know where its soul is. "You are gorgeous enough to look upon," she exclaims; "but what is the end of your being? where is your life? what are you all about?" And so the supreme art, the result of so much cutting down and binding up, slinks away for a time; Nature re-asserts her position; Simplicity reigns supreme; and loosened speech, with plain directness, tells of the soul and the life.

WILSON.—Ah, I see what you refer to. As I know your admiration for one particular side of Wordsworth's work, I will finish your remarks for you: This laughing of sheer Simplicity in the face of too far-reaching Art was seen to perfection when Wordsworth arose and gave men to understand that what Nature needed was purely natural speech; and laying forcible hands on the English

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tongue, he shook it till it yielded up the honest, single-meaning words he needed for the utterance of his honest, single-meaning thought.

THE BOOKWORM.—But at the present time the old need is in existence again, and thoughtful men are crying out for a return once more to simple, straightforward speech.

WILSON.—And well they may; for, in the case of the latest development of our literary poetry, the extreme care with which words have been heaped upon each other, and the mad pranks they have been made to play, have been altogether out of proportion to the sentiment or thought underlying the expression. I don't mean to complain so much of the art of "packing a sentence," in which George Meredith seems to me—at least, in some of his poetry—to excel, as of that finikin meddling with the beautiful chastity of the English language, which brings about results such as we find in some of the sonnet-work of the late Dante Rossetti.

THE BOOKWORM.—To what do you especially refer?

WILSON.—I have in my mind these lines, which I think illustrate my meaning:—

"Because our talk was of the cloud-control
And moon-track of the journeying face of Fate,
Her tremulous kisses faltered at love's gate
And her eyes dreamed against a distant goal;"

and:—

"What shall be said of this embattled day
And armèd occupation of this night
By all thy foes beleaguered,—now when sight
Nor sound denotes the loved one far away?
Of these thy vanquished hours what shalt thou say,—
As every sense to which she dealt delight
Now labours lonely o'er the stark noon-height
To reach the sunset's desolate disarray?"

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If you wish for further instances of want of due proportion in thought and expression, you have only to turn to Swinburne's volumes. There is, of course, no denying that music is to be found in abundance in his pages; but what I do deny is that his gorgeous language and magnificent music are but correspondent clothing of an equal gorgeousness and magnificence of underlying thought. Are thought and sentiment to be over-dressed, and go free of remark, whilst over-dressed men and women are pitied and laughed at? To me, some of Swinburne's volumes tell the tale of a struggle between thought and sentiment on the one hand, and wordiness on the other, in which wordiness conquers with wild dance. It is all nonsense to talk about singing like the nightingale or the lark just for the mere sake of the music. Think you that to bird-listeners there is nothing but liquidity in these songs? You may be sure there is plenty of backbone to them all, something worth singing about. At one time I had looked to Robert Buchanan to lead the return to natural speech in our poetry, but alas! he has not fulfilled all the high hopes cherished on his account when he set out on his poetical journey. To me there is an unrest about his poems, an indication of their author's weariness of his work when but half through with it, due, undoubtedly, to the rapidity with which he completes and publishes his productions.

THE BOOKWORM.—And in what direction, pray, are we to turn? Have we lost ourselves wholly in trackless wastes? Is there no friendly guide in the darkness? no narrow path to the outskirts, where the sun shines brightly and *human* speech is heard?

WILSON.—In Lewis Morris's works we find, to a great extent—an extent even greater than we had anticipated—this loosened speech, this simplicity and freedom of language which is so restful, coming, as it does, after what is fatiguing and involved in modern verse. His purposes,

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moreover, of this kind are decided and clearly defined. Prefixed to *The Epic of Hades* we find this translation of one of the "Welsh Triads," which indicates well the temper of Mr. Morris in regard to his work: "The three excellencies of poetry: simplicity of language, simplicity of subject, and simplicity of invention." And even more plainly does his own verse speak on the point; I remember just these lines from "The Apology":—

> "I may not scorn, I cannot prize,
> Those whose quick-coming fancies rise
> Only in quaint disguise."

THE BOOKWORM.—It is astonishing to find how little sympathy really exists in the world. Through all the ages the burden of the cry of genius has been: "Misunderstood, misunderstood." I cannot help thinking that the primary cause of this perpetual misunderstanding is the inadequacy of human speech, however fluent and apt, to express the thoughts under which great men live and labour. At the best of times, when the secrets of the universe appear unveiled before us, and when the soul is comparatively free of speech, the wild freedom and expressiveness of which prompts it to refer the cause of its intoxication back to some mystery behind or above itself—at these, the most pleasing and seductive of times, what are we but mere infants,

> "Crying for the light;
> And with no language but a cry?"

Our tenderest and our strongest thoughts, those that live with us in the sweet wonderland of dawn and twilight, and those which stretch upwards towards the Infinite with the strength of noble manhood—these all become stale and jejune when brought into contact with halting

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speech. And what wonder is it that the dearest thoughts and holiest aspirations which, perchance, have lain close to a great man's heart, and comforted him as doth the presence of angels, should, when uttered forth, appear distorted, proportionless—nay, almost maniacal!

WILSON.—We are getting quite Homeric in our dialogue; the Catalogue of Ships "isn't in it" with us.

THE BOOKWORM.—Just another minute, there's a good fellow! I shall feel better after my outburst. I was going to say: What lessons of patience and forbearance this should teach us with reference to what may appear shortcomings in works of art! A workman (I take the word in its broadest sense) should not be judged so much by his actual accomplishment, as by the spirit in which he worked; not so much by what he has uttered, as by what, deep down in his soul, has refused to shape itself in the language of ordinary mortals. The greatest productions of a man of genius should be to us but as if the earth had been shaken to its most precious centre, and caused to cast forth splintered jewels, which, with all their intrinsic value, are only indications of the wealth yet remaining deep-buried and unrevealed. You recollect what Aldrich sings of this unexpressed:—

"As sweet as the breath that goes
From the lips of the white rose;
As weird as the elfin lights
That glimmer of frosty nights;
As wild as the winds that tear
The curled, red leaf in the air,
  Is the song I have never sung.

. . . . . .

"On some miraculous day
Perhaps it will come and stay;
In some unimagined spring
I may find my voice, and sing
  The song I have never sung."

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Then there is that charming little inscription in the *Book of Verses*, addressed by W. E. Henley to his wife :—

"Take, dear, my little sheaf of songs.

. . . . . .

"And, singing as when all was young,
They will recall
Those others, lived, but left unsung—
The best of all."

WILSON.—I certainly think there is a great deal of truth in the theory of the limitedness of expression accounting for much of the misunderstanding existing about great men and their works, from Plato down to Hegel, and Ruskin, and Emerson. Ruskin himself says, in *Sesame and Lilies:* "Be sure, if the author is worth anything, that you will not get at his meaning all at once; nay! that at his whole meaning you will not for a long time arrive in anywise. Not that he does not say what he means, and in strong words, too; *but he cannot say it all.*" And Lew——I was nearly quoting Lewis Morris again.

THE BOOKWORM.—Go ahead! there are no perverse critics present.

WILSON.—That Lewis Morris has realised something of these shackles laid on souls that would be free *to sing all*, but are not, is evident from his poem, "Dumb." Hand me his *Songs of Two Worlds*, there's a good fellow. This is the passage :—

"But we are dumb, we are dumb, and may not tell
What stirs within us, though the soul may throb
And tremble with its passion; though the heart
Dissolve in weeping: dumb. Nature may spread
Sublimest sights of beauty; art inspire
High thoughts and pure of God-like sacrifice;
Yet no word comes. Heroic, daring deeds

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Thrill us, yet no word comes; we are dumb, we are dumb,
Save that from finer souls at times may rise,
Once in an age, faint, inarticulate sounds,
Low, halting tones of wonder, such as come
From children looking on the stars.

. . . . . .

They come, they go,
Those sweet impressions spent on separate souls,
Like rain-drops on the endless ocean-plains,
Lost as they fall. The world rolls on; lives spring,
Blossom, and fade; the play of life is played
More vivid than of old, on a wider stage,
With more consummate actors; yet the dull,
Cold jaws of sullen silence swallow up
The strain, and it is lost.

. . . . . .

Only the stress,
The pain, the hope, the longing, the constraint
Of limited faculties circling round and round
The grim circumference, and finding naught
Of outlet to the dread unknown beyond,
Can lend the poet voice. Only the weight,
The dulness of our senses, which makes dumb
And hushes half the finer utterance,
Makes possible the song, and modulates
The too-exalted music, that it falls
So soft upon the listening soul, that life,
Not withered by the awful harmony,
Nor dumb with too much sweetness, nor struck blind
By the too vivid presence of the Unknown,
Fulfils its round of duty—elevated,
Not slain, by too much splendour—comforted,
Not thunder-smitten—soothed, not laid asleep—
And ever through the devious maze of being,
Fares in slow, narrowing cycles to the end."

THE BOOKWORM.—That is just what Emerson saw, when he wrote this (taking up a volume, and reading): "In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labour, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is

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only half himself, the other half is his expression. Notwithstanding this necessity to be published, adequate expression is rare. I know not how it is that we need an interpreter; but the great majority of men seem to be minors, who have not yet come into possession of their own, or mutes, who cannot report the conversations they have had with Nature. . . . . For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organised that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem."

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SARUM CLOSE AND COVENTRY PATMORE—THE WELL-WORN IDEAL.

I OFTEN wander alone through the quiet Close and round the Cathedral: it gives me just the rest and peace I sometimes need. I love to see the stately pile looming up massive against the indigo sky of early night, with the horned moon above it, whilst over the neighbouring elms one solitary star is serenely set. I do not object even to a drizzly, uncomfortable night; for then the lighted windows of the houses in the Close show out brightly, and make one imagine all kinds of sweet and possible dream-life having existence within. A moving shadow thrown momentarily against the blind is suggestive of a poem, and——. But I must curb my wandering fancy. I say I do not object even to a drizzly, uncomfortable night for my stroll in the Cathedral precincts; in fact, I often prefer it, for I then meet fewer people, and have less fear of getting my dreams dispelled by an unlucky collision with some aimless tourist.

The other evening, in my peregrinations in this direction, I suddenly awoke to the discovery that, although I had often passed and repassed the Deanery, I had

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never heard what Coventry Patmore, in *The Angel in the House*, would fain have us believe he listened to :—

"The Wedding-March of Mendelssohn,"

by

"Someone in the study play'd";

neither had

"The serious strain
Of Sarum bells"

ever made sweet music to my ear; for, alas! the Cathedral has no bells. Thus was I led to question how far Patmore really was acquainted with this quiet old city when he made it the material foundation of his poem, and to what extent his whole apparent reality had been evolved out of his inner consciousness. Conversing thus with myself, I passed from the gate, through the streets, into the country beyond, where my happy home-life is spent, and where sheep pastures and trout streams abound. I found Wilson awaiting my return. He had been lonely, he said, in his bachelor rooms, and had come out for a chat. He had brought with him our mutual friend Brookes, who occasionally runs down from town with all sorts of book-treasures and literary club gossip. I sometimes think that if I were not so much attached to the dreamy comforts and even tenor of my fireside existence, I should envy his club life, with its "briefless barrister fellows," as he irreverently calls his legal friends, and its fair sprinkling of Bohemians, in mortal guise as artists and play-wrights, and poets, who had been laureates had they but chanced upon life when the world was younger and less sophisticated than it now is.

The night had by this time closed in, chilly and comfortless; and very soon we were seated round the study

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fire, chatting away on a variety of small subjects suggested by the visit of our town friend. I casually named the points that had occurred to me with reference to Patmore and his Sarum poetry, which immediately suggested "somewhat for conversation" to us. We agreed, in a sage and superior manner, that, use it as he may, an artist should not unnecessarily tamper with the reality upon which he bases his dreams; however light and airy the habitation may be, its foundation should be concrete, decided, definite. And so we proceeded to refer to man's actual life in relation to that ideal existence which is ever present in the mind possessed of the elements of true growth.

BROOKES.—After all, life is often nothing but an endless search after what is unfindable—an earnest and prolonged endeavour to become acquainted with what, in its very nature, is unknowable. We look before and after, and, as Shelley says, we pine for what is not.

THE BOOKWORM.—Yet is not this pining the source of man's purest joys as well as his bitterest disappointments? To the soul alive and growing, the occasional recollection of how godlike it is comes as a draught of pure water to the traveller in the desert. As it pauses to ponder for awhile on its divine origin, the encircling air grows full of unseen and alluring voices; and these, Circe-like, wrap their entanglements about it, and

> "The sound
> Of grosser music dies, and all the earth
> Is full of subtle undertones, which change
> The listener."

I cannot think it any cause of wonder, then, that one, with soul touched by the finger of genius, should, on hearing this undefinable music of the other land, leave behind him all social ties—wife and child, father and

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mother—and with pale face, written over with untold longings, go out upon the fatal search, which hath its ending, alas! too often, in Tartarus instead of Olympus. Shelley's *Alastor* is not all a dream!

BROOKES.—Let us have a definition, as Coleridge used to ask of the young Hazlitt, when his talk became wordy. What is this Ideal, raved about by poets and severely analysed by philosophers?

THE BOOKWORM.—Simply that which the seeker sees himself deficient in, and feels necessary to complete his being. It has its birth in the real. You recollect what Carlyle wrote: "In this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable actual wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal." And Macnish, in his *Philosophy of Sleep*, expresses his belief that dreams are uniformly the resuscitation or re-embodiment of thoughts which have formerly, in some shape or other, occupied the mind. He says: "They are old ideas revived, either in an entire state, or heterogeneously mingled together." This, certainly, in some measure, helps us to understand the formation of the Ideal, as well as the modifications it undergoes; and how new elements are repeatedly added to it, making it more and more perfect—indeed, in some instances altering its character altogether. What is pleasing or profitable to the mind is gathered up, and used in the continued perfecting of the already existing desire of the soul. Hence the necessity of high and holy surroundings, and the keeping of youthful minds, especially, in a healthy atmosphere. Ruskin is convinced that the sensation of beauty is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of heart, both for its truth and for its intensity; and our art-treatises abound with exhortations to students to care for the mind and heart, if a high and pure style of painting is aimed at.

BROOKES.—You refer to theories. Let me add, that in the actual education of the eye and hand in our best

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schools of art, all that is imperfect in outline and colour is carefully excluded, and only the purest examples set before the students. A certain knowledge of the utility and place of these is also demanded before the student is permitted to partake of the intoxication of composition.

THE BOOKWORM.—Would that all youthful minds could somehow be bound down to severest purity of thought, and allowed converse only with the Immortals, until the time when the Ideal should be formed! But alas! this is altogether impracticable, for who can tell the time of the secret birth of the Ideal?

WILSON.—The matter begins to assume a serious aspect. If what you say is true, and if it be also equally true that it takes all mankind to make one man, then is history to us most invaluable. Through its records we are able to draw to the light the distinguishing or desirable trait in the character of each of its worthies. Of one and the other—

"We mark the virtue and we shun the vice;"

and what is thus gleaned, bit by bit, becomes one symmetrical whole, to which the breath necessary to vivid existence is given, and lo! it is to us our Ideal.

BROOKES.—The Ideal, though born of the actual, is yet distinct from it; for in poverty genius can call up its mental splendours independent of its real surroundings. Tom Moore, it is true, gathered about him a deal of eastern drapery and like accessories during the composition of *Lalla Rookh;* but in direct opposition to this is Ariosto's reply to a friend, who told him his habitation was not fit for one who had raised so many fine palaces in his writings. He said: "The structure of words and that of stones are not the same thing." And you recollect that Walt Whitman's room is thus described by one of his admirers: "About fifteen feet square, with a

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single window looking out on barren solitudes; a small cot, a washstand, with a little looking-glass hung over it; a pine table, with pen, ink, and paper on it; an old line-engraving, representing Bacchus, hung on the wall, and opposite a similar one of Silenus; these constituted his visible environments."

WILSON.—And furthermore, it is not often that we care to remember that the images of beauty flitting across our path often borrow their hues from things commonplace and lowly. We admire the gorgeousness of the butterfly's wings: need we call to mind the fact that this same thing of beauty and sunshine once lay in embryo in a worm, which could not move but with its mouth in the dust?

THE BOOKWORM.—I must own to an undesirable tendency to-night in the direction of the homily. The whole subject to which we refer seems to open out great fields for hard work in practical gleaning. There is one thing most certain——

BROOKES and WILSON together.—And pray what is that?

THE BOOKWORM.—That when a staid old gentleman lays himself out to talk sense to two careless infants, he is generally scoffed at. But ah! *I* have a crumb of comfort; to be great is to be misunderstood, in some instances even to be persecuted—but did you never read of the bears that came to save Elisha from mockery?

BROOKES.—Get along to your "say," you old fraud, with your Emersonian "misunderstood"; and remember, no cheating us of a single scrap of your more than human wisdom.

THE BOOKWORM (reassured, and more dignified than ever in his manner).—I was going to remark, when you boys rudely interrupted me, that the possession of an Ideal is fraught with greatest good. According to its purity is the purity of the man's life; according to its

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loftiness the nobleness which distinguishes him and points him out as a hero. The men who stand forth pre-eminently on the page of history are those who have followed on earnestly in the search after what their souls desired to make them still greater. I can think of no more precious gifts to be bestowed on a young man than a lofty Ideal and the power of will to follow after it. These are the qualifications needed to make his life "as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn;" and, walking in this higher path, he can well afford to scorn low pleasures. He can sing with Hafiz of its immortal sweets: "Nor has any man inhaled from the musk-bladder of the merchant, or from the musky morning wind, that sweet air which I am permitted to breathe every hour of the day." If the desire to attain is an indication of a certain power of attainment, then is the possession of an Ideal to a young man the key of the gate opening upon the perfection possible to himself. At best, what poor, tame creatures we are without this thirst of the soul!

WILSON.—In this light, an ordinary, unaspiring creature does seem insignificant.

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes, the life of one leading an every-day, take-what-may-come sort of existence, does appear all this, and useless besides, when compared with that of one who, in possession of his Ideal, stands up and looks with conscious manliness into the blue vault above, studded with stars that whisper ever of hope, and of a future "bright beyond a mortal's telling"! But men resemble trees, inasmuch as some are content to bend their heads so low as to reach the dull pool at their feet, whilst others raise themselves majestically, stretching up their proud heads to meet the sunbeams in their descent upon the earth.

BROOKES.—How clearly Lessing understood the benefits accruing from this Search, apart from any question

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of finding; and how well he has expressed it in that memorable saying: "Did the Almighty, holding in His right hand *Truth*, and in His left *Search after Truth*, deign to offer me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request *Search after Truth!*"

WILSON.—What marked earnestness we often find evidenced in work in this direction! Turner, with his soul full of colour-dreams and the gorgeousness of sunlit landscapes, slaved, with his nose to the canvas, from sunrise to sunset; and of Gainsborough 'tis recorded that he painted by candle-light, since he could not occupy his evenings with anything so satisfying to his mind.

THE BOOKWORM.—And there is that touching incident, so often repeated, with variations, in the life of many a student in the present day, which is related in the *Talmud*. Hillel, "the chief of Israel," when a youth, was often cramped for means to pursue his studies. At one time, lacking the fee demanded by the porter for entrance to the college, he climbed up on the window-sill, hoping to hear the lectures through the panes. It chanced to be snowing, and the student became so intensely interested that he was quite covered with snow, without being aware of it, and became insensible through the cold. The attention of those inside was called to his state by the early darkening of the room; and by them he was carried in and restored to consciousness.

A strange infatuation possesses the seeking soul, and sends it onward. The storm rages, and the vessel is flung forward by one wave, only to be caught by another, to be precipitated into the merciless clutch of a third, and so on, till the wild storm ceases, and morning breaks.

WILSON.—But one need never look for sympathy.

THE BOOKWORM.—Even were such obtainable, it

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would clog the soul and prevent its soaring. Our flight must be above all earthly influences. In the morning we must cry with the lark, "Up, up to heaven's gate!" and at night the stars must be our only companions.

> "Out of the east and out of the west no man understands me.
> O, the happier I, who confide to none but the wind."

This absence of human sympathy has various results. Thoreau withdraws to his hut at Walden, and Diogenes seeks refuge in his tub. Shelley once, with great unwisdom, sought to find in others the fire which burnt in his own breast, and he tells us with what result: "When I have thought to unburden my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood, like one in a distant and savage land." As poets saunter alone in the woodlands, chanting their rhymes to the music of the nightingale's song, so must we, without companionship, wander through the world, tuning our lives to those sacred harmonies heard clearest by the soul most lonely.

BROOKES.—But existence in an abode so far uplifted above the realities of life has its serious drawbacks, and is often attended with multitudinous disappointments.

THE BOOKWORM.—Yes, I grant this freely. Another result is often a great dissatisfaction at finding so much that is commonplace in the works of great men. One's standard is apt to be raised too high. We hear, perhaps, the multitude loud-voiced in praise of some picture by an artist of renown. Our imagination immediately presents to us an idea of what this picture is, and some day, with bright expectancy and eagerness of soul, we go to view it, to get our idea of it confirmed, or rather to see how far it exceeds our highest imaginings. Alas! is this it—this thing of palpable pigment and canvas? It should have been divine, and it is but human; it should have

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been heavenly, and it has the unmistakable stamp of the earthly upon it. In like manner, a much-talked-of poem rarely yields us what we look for.

How well the Bishop of Derry, in his recent volume, *St. Augustine's Holiday and other Poems*, has translated this experience into words:—

"I never yet heard music, however sweet,
  Never saw flower or light, ocean or hill,
  But a quick thought of something finer still
Touch'd me with sadness. Never did I meet
Completest beauty but was incomplete;
  Never view'd shapes half fair enough to fill
  The royal galleries of my boundless will.
Never wrote I one line that I could greet
A twelvemonth after with a brow of fire.
  Thus, then, with aim unreach'd, thought unexpress'd,
Unsatiated throbbings of desire,
  I walk my way of life, and find no rest.
Thus beauty does not soothe me, and a cry
Of some deep want ends all my poetry."

BROOKES.—George Sand certainly got at the hem of Truth's garment when she said: "Art is not a study of positive reality, but a seeking after Ideal Truth." One of our famous painters continually kept near him his greatest dream in colour; and his answer to all who came with their rolls of bank-paper to purchase it was: "It is not finished yet." Every touch he added was but an opening for the influx of new and clearer light, showing where others were needed. The American artist, W. M. Hunt, so thoroughly understood this "noble discontent," that he used to tell his pupils: "You can't finish a thing farther than you can go. It is *at last* that you'll finish. Corot doesn't finish, and he's over eighty years of age. If you all finished, the book would be shut up."

THE BOOKWORM.—Yet it is of the throes and pains of

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this infinite longing that great achievements are born. The builders of Babel must have known that their work would never reach Heaven, yet they built on, with the certainty that the more they strove, the higher their mass of stone would rear its head. Our world's workers are well aware that perfection cannot be attained, for a point that at one time is to them perfection, is no longer such when reached. Yet they all, with one will, strive for it. Thus come into existence our epics and our operas, our sculpture and our paintings. It is in answer to all this mute, earnest entreaty that the God-like condescends to reveal itself, though, alas, only in part.

WILSON.—But how very nearly all this approaches to ambition! The results are often similar. Vertot reports of Mahomet the Great, that though he had conquered two empires, twelve kingdoms, and about three hundred cities, yet these were so far from satisfying his ambition, that towards the close of his life he was deeply engaged in new enterprises. This seems apparent from the inscription he ordered to be engraved upon his tomb. Not the least hint was to be given of his accomplished victories, only a short plan of his would-have-been future: "My ambition was the conquest of Rhodes and of proud Italy."

BROOKES.—Sometimes, however, a dreamer is sufficiently awake to analyse his dreams, and to see their tendency. Tennyson sees the brilliant unreality, and hears the soft, seducing tones; and this is his reply:—

> "Silence, beautiful voice,
> Be still, for you only trouble the mind
> With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
> A glory I shall not find."

THE BOOKWORM.—After all, the final word seems to be, that there is a pleasure of no mean account in this

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unsatisfied quest, wherein hope is not smothered, possession does not satiate, and the happiness of man's longing is continued unto him. Human nature has ever been the same. A paradise you wish a man to enjoy must be withheld from him—or, rather, held out to him.

But at last this search of the soul ceases to be fruitful of joy. It finds emptiness where fulness was to have been. Even love palls. Alas! she is not all the white-robed maiden that once abode in mid heaven, and lured us on to fatal possession. Eternity draws nigh, and scatters her snows broadcast; some flakes find their final resting-place among the hairs of our own head. What is to occupy attention and desire when former pleasures fail? I say, "eternity draws nigh"; then is the season for the Infinite to become more clearly recognised as the object round which the soul should weave its desires and its creations, and in which the longings of the mind may find their ultimate rest.

In this increased light a new translation of our life's poetry and philosophy comes to us. What fools we have been, to be sure, to have fancied that the object of any deep-felt want of the soul existed out of the Eternal Source of all! Bossuet speaks out for us our newly-discovered wisdom. "It is certain," he says, "that God is the primitive reason of all that exists and has understanding in the universe; that He is the true original, and that everything is true by relation to His Eternal Idea;" in short, that seeking our Ideal is seeking Him, and that to find our Ideal is to lose ourselves in Him.

The fire has burnt low, my friends; and I must apologise for taking such a serious view of matters in general.

As we wished each other "good-night" in the hall, I enquired laughingly of Wilson if *his* Lewis Morris hadn't something suited to our topic. He simply repeated a few lines, without comment or suggestion of any kind,

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and then went out into the star-lit night, leaving them with me as a benediction; and these are they:—

"For those who hear
Some fair, faint echoes, though the crowd be deaf,
And see the white god's garments on the hills,
Which the crowd sees not, though they may not find
Fit music for their visions; they are blest,
Not pitiable."

"For I hold
That what we seek is but our other self,
Other and higher, neither wholly like,
Nor wholly different, the half-life the gods
Retained when half was given."

"I judge it better, indeed,
To seek in life, as now I know I sought,
Some fair, impossible love, which slays our life;
Some fair Ideal, raised too high for man;
And failing, to grow mad, and cease to be,
Than to decline, as they do who have found
Broad-paunched content, and weal, and happiness:
And so an end. For one day, as I know,
The high aim unfulfilled fulfils itself;
The deep, unsatisfied thirst is satisfied."

And I sat in my loneliness, and thanked God for the consolation contained in these lines for the man who, looking back over his life, sees it full of unsatisfied desires, vain dreams, or purposes too divine to blossom on this lower earth.

THE END.

DERBY AND NOTTINGHAM: FRANK MURRAY.

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